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"There," he said, drawlingly, as he took two bank notes from his pocket, and held them out fluttering in his fingers

See page 258.

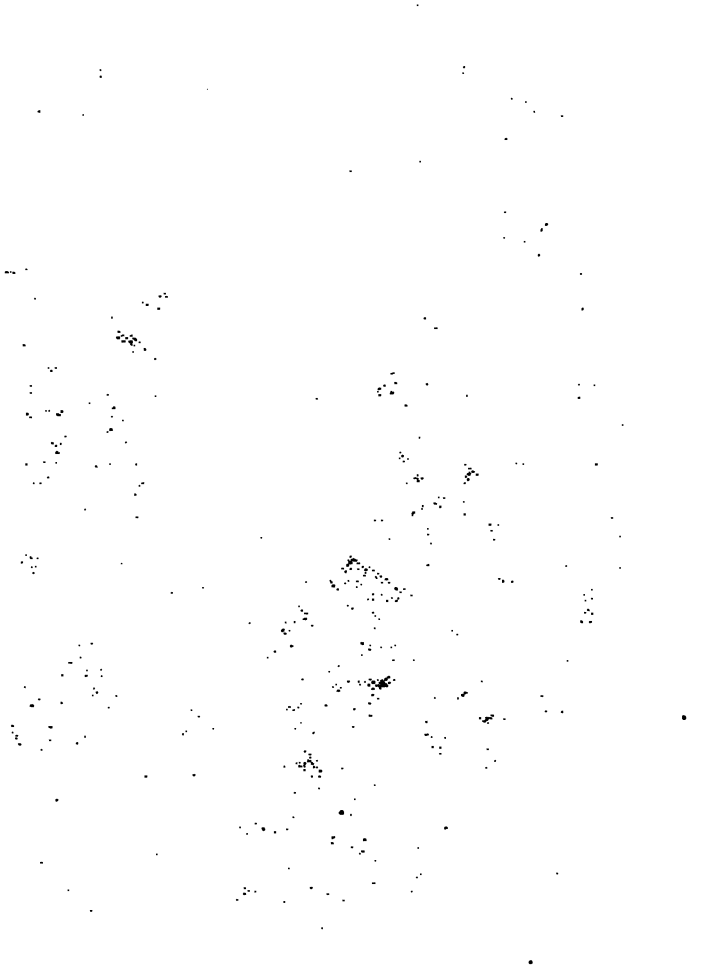
MARGARET,

OR,

PREJUDICE AT HOME AND ITS VICTIMS.

"I loathe you and your offer alike, and I desire you to quit the room and the house.—See page 159.

STRINGER & TOWNSEND, NEW YORK.



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MARGARET:

OR,

PREJUDICE AT HOME, AND ITS VICTIMS.

An Autobiography.

NEW-YORK.
STRINGER & TOWNSEND, 222 BROADWAY.
1854.

I am a citizen of the world, and as such I lay claim to none of the patriotic feeling that inclines others to glory in the land of their birth. Indeed, it was made so clear to me years ago that I never ought to have been born at all, that I may well hesitate at writing myself down a denizen of any particular land; and as I commenced life without right to any name beyond the simple one prefixed to this book, it may be understood at once that I was the first of my race.

The accident of my birth occurred at ——, a cathedral city of England. I believe I was as wilful and wayward in my infancy and girlhood as any one could be about whose privilege to bring added trouble into this world there was no question. I had my antipathies and partialities, which were, perhaps, the more decided because they were allowed small scope. Of the three persons with whom alone I held any intercourse until my fifteenth year, I loved and reverenced the first, feared the second, and thoroughly disliked the third.

The first of these was my grandfather, Thomas Marples, He was a verger of the cathedral, as his father had been before him. He was a venerable-looking old man, tall, thin, and slightly bent; his long white hair floated about a countenance that had been handsome, and that now beamed with intelligence and piety, and his singularly large eyes had a mournful expression, especially when they rested upon myself, that very early arrested my attention and drew me towards him, and, more than anything else, confirmed his influence over me. Those large melancholy eyes haunted my dreams. There was a mystery in them that I could not fathom in the days when it never occured to me to ask any question about myself, and I was busied with it in my childish way till I could not get rid of the impression. I saw that there was some secret suffering, some hidden bleeding of the heart, thinly veiled from me beneath the uniform serenity and uncomplaining endurance of one who knew in whom he had trusted. In this manner I first become acquainted with the admonitory heart-ache that, if only by way of variety, comes upon us even in childhood. And as the heart must be touched before the mind can be properly regulated, this latent interest in himself led me to listen more

attentively to the pious instructions of my grand-father. His simple but earnest exposition of the great plan of redemption disclosed it to me in all its sublimity and beauty. Familiar with the histories of all civilized nations, he brought before me the examples of the noble and good who had apparently lived and died for the sole purpose of testing this great power of God to overcome the world; and, in the absence of all personal trial, there was an abundance of impatient energy in my spirit that led me to sympathise with those who had thus suffered and triumphed. It never struck me that the principles which I could follow so well in theory were reducible to practice: that I might show a little more becoming submission to my imperious Aunt Betsy, and endure with more patience the hard-tasking and stern manner of Uncle Stephen.

The latter did not reside with us. He was a bachelor; and I first remember him living in the High-street of the city, where he kept a silver-smith's and jeweller's shop. He afterwards gave up business and removed to a small house near my grand-father's. He might have been as old as the latter, but he was more robust, and in personal appearance very different. He was short, rather stout, and slightly deformed; his head protruding abruptly from between shoulders more than usually prominent and rounded. His hair, of an iron-grey, curled closely about his head; his lips were thin, and he had a habit of compressing them that gave to the lower part of his face an unnatural expression; his eyes were small, black and piercing; and his countenance altogether had a strong, stern determination about it that struck me in those earlier days as indicating a tyrannical temper of mind, against which I was well inclined to rebel. It was he who sent to my grand-father's house the instrument—a pianoforte—upon which he gave me instructions in music. He commenced teaching me French before I was two years old, and, when I had become moderately proficient, he would not allow me to address him in any other language. In addition, he gave me a thorough English education, and I had a natural talent for drawing, which he fostered by providing me with all requisite materials, and the best models for copying. Four hours out of every day, morning and afternoon,

he rigidly devoted to my instruction, and he generally left me more than sufficient work to fill up the rest of my time. What struck me as disagreeable in Uncle Stephen was, that all this seemed a laborious task to him rather than a work of duty or pleasure. There was no familiarity between us; he never addressed me by any term of endearment, but came and went like the hard taskmaster he was. If I chanced to satisfy him, he would say, "That will do, but you must do better," and I knew that no better doing could draw us closer together as uncle and niece.

My Aunt Betsy was, perhaps, not quite so old as either of these two, though it would have been difficult to guess her age. Almost as tall as my grand-father, she was of more masculine make, gaunt, large-boned, and hard-features. Whilst Uncle Stephen's manner always expressed stern resolution to go through with a task, hers always expressed impatience. I was never in the right place, never out of her way; always making work and doing none. And these complaints did not spring from any desire that I should help her; for Aunt Betsy was only in her element when working hard, and she could not in our small household find enough to do. I only made matters worse by offering my services; I was fit for nothing that she could understand, and had better hold my tongue. Yet this rough, hard woman had brought me up from my very birth, and I struggled with my repugnance, and tried to believe that in some yet undiscovered corner of her heart I held a better place then that outwardly assigned to me.

I believe I was by nature affectionate, and that it was not my fault that I lavished all my affection upon my grand-father. There was something genial and benignant about him that seemed to infect others, and when in his presence I always found Uncle Stephen and Aunt Betsy more gracious. He had this influence over them, and I soon found it out. Then his small collection of books constituted my sole recreation. I read to him or with him, and there was perfect sympathy between us. Our usual sitting-room was crowded with antique furniture that had belonged to my great-grand-father. Grotesquely carved chests and cabinets, and tables with a multitude of twisted legs, and arm-chairs of curious make, all polished bright as the incessant labor of Aunt

Betsy could make them. Piled upon these cabinets, or stowed away in the chests, or scattered upon the tables, were worm-eaten editions of ancient works, both religious and profane. Amongst the latter were the old chroniclers, Stow and Camden, Leland and Holinshed; Defoe's History of the Plague, Walton's Angler, the works of Bacon, Locke, and Newton, and a fair show of the elder poets and dramatists. It was my chief delight to pore over these works, and find a vent for my sympathies in them, and form from them some vague notion of the world from which I was so completely shut out. It did not strike me so forcibly as it might have done that my way of life was very odd; that I had never mixed with children or young people of my own age, and that we had no visitors. If I went out, I was accompanied by one of my three protectors; but as we had a large garden to walk in, I seldom did go out except to the cathedral service. When there I was too much engrossed by the assembled congregation; I fancied I could read people's characters in their faces, and I had conceived an especial reverence for one old lady who passed in and out, leaning on a gold-headed cane, and followed by a footman. She was very spare in figure, very erect and rigid; but her hands and head had a palsied movement. There was nothing prepossessing in her face, which was so shrunken, and wrinkled, and battered by time, that I fairly gave her credit for having once looked more amiable. She reminded me, however, of the devout and noble woman of whom I had read, and there was to me something particularly touching in the piety of the very aged; in the bowing of the feeble knees and the white head on the verge of eternity. On one occasion, whilst passing out of the cathedral, she dropped her stick. I was close behind her, and I darted forward, picked up the stick, and presented it to her before the footman could interfere. I shall never forget the sudden look of absolute horror with which she drew herself up, and waved me back, and motioned her attendant to take the stick from me. I was sufficiently abashed before Aunt Betsy seized me by the arm, and gave me a gripe and a savage shake that almost made me cry out with pain.

This was my first attempt to interfere with the arrangements of the outer world, of which I knew so little. My

conduct was reported to my grand-father, who gently admonished me to keep out of the way of Lady Leigh, who was very proud, for the future. I believe that first contact with the world roused all that was evil in my own nature. I had lived so entirely with old people that my sympathies followed the aged rather than the young, and my first emotion was one of intense pain at being thus scornfully repulsed by a person whom I was so well inclined to venerate. I had obeyed a blind instinct which prompted me to help the helpless, and I was told that this was wrong. I had been taught, above all things, to be courteous, and my first act of courtesy had drawn down wrath upon me from all sides. From Lady Leigh first, because she was proud. It was because I was her inferior in some way, in every way, perhaps that she had repulsed my attempt to render her a slight service. This set me thinking, for the first time, about my position in the world. I knew that it was humble, but I thought the days were past in which Christians, professing a creed that inculcates humility, and honors poverty, trampled upon their brethren and stamped disgrace upon an inevitable lot. I had heard so much from my grand-father about the glorious effects produced by the Reformation, that I felt sure this must be one of them. Indeed, I was simple enough to believe it must be the principal one; and he was accustomed to speak so enthusiastically about the rapid progress of true Christianity in the world, that I was fully prepared to be greeted by open hearts and arms whenever I entered it. The case of this Lady Leigh must be a peculiar one, or there must be something very wrong about myself. Who was I, after all? I had been taken to see my mother's grave-stone, which simply bore the name of "Alice," inscribed under that of my grand-mother. I must have had a father, and who and what was he? I had frequently questioned my grand-father and Aunt Betsy about him, but they evaded my inquiry, and I had allowed it to drop; for I noticed that the mention of either of my parents occasioned them great pain, which I attributed to grief for their loss. Now, however, it struck me that there must be some other motive for this silence. Mere sorrow for the dead would inevitably yield to time: it seemed more probable that some disgrace connected with the past weighed on the spirit of my grand-father, and

prompted the secrecy which was becoming oppressive to me, and compelled us to live in the seclusion that I saw was peculiar to ourselves.

I was astonished that this thought had never occurred to me before, and the feelings it called forth mastered me completely. I was not naturally so tame and docile as I had appeared to be, and my spirit rose up to resist what I considered a wrong and an oppression. It had been no mercy to me to keep me in ignorance of my true position, to allow me to go forth into the world and then learn that the crimes of others had rendered me an outcast. I was indignant alike with those who had thus reared me and with the world, above whose injustice I was determined to rise.

But I did not speak out at once; I underwent a terrible conflict before I could summon courage to look the worst in the face. I had been reared with high notions of honor; I had all that reverence of worth's sake that compels the spirit to shrink from every appearance of evil; and I felt that death itself was preferable to the degredation into which I was about to fall. I tormented myself day and night with all manner of conjectures. I knew that my mother was a mere girl when she died; perhaps hurried to an early grave by the vicious courses of her husband. My suspicions could only fix upon him. Perhaps he had been a murderer, and had suffered the penalty of his crime. I uttered a loud cry of horror at the thought, and flung my hands out wildly with a sense of loathing for the blood that flowed in them and curdled about my heart. It seemed probable, however, that his crime was of lesser magnitude, and that he was still living. I had never been told that he was dead; I had taken it for granted when I was informed that I had no father. When I asked to see his grave, and they said it was not there, I was satisfied. The fact was, that my deep love and reverence for my grand-father, his own earnest truthfulness, and benignity, and piety, had satisfied me altogether, so that I reposed in an atmosphere of peacefulness and affection to which no breath of distrust might come. He had, too, taught me to forget myself in others, and to find a full life in the undying presence of the great and good of all ages, so that this sudden concentration of all thought and

feeling in my individual destiny seemed to change my very nature.

I, too, had a career to run, and this thought also occurred to me for the first time,—my protectors were all old people who might soon be taken away. What was to become of me? I had been told that I must earn my own bread, but how was I to be introduced to the world with this load of ignominy upon me? How was I to endure the natural repugnance of the noble and the good? How, above all, was I to bear this weight upon my own heart through a long life?

I felt that my grand-father had miscalculated upon the resignation to the will of Providence which he had urged upon me so continually. To content myself with a life of shame seemed against the spirit of all I had been taught; and, especially in these days to which had descended the doctrine of Christ in all its purity, I felt that it would be terrible to be so branded in the midst of the pure and the godly who were already peopling the whole earth. I wished to bury myself from the eyes of an immaculate world in which my very presence would be an offence.

This was the idea I had formed of the world, and I felt that it was the terrible wickedness of my own heart that inclined me to rebel against its decrees. I did not imagine that it would altogether use me ill, but that I should be oppressed by its compassion, tortured by its tolerance. My own horror of everything sinful or dishonorable helped me to conceive this of others. My opinion of Lady Leight's piety was exalted by the very conduct that inspired me with a fearful sort of hatred. I had given her no time for reflection, and it was the natural instinct of a godly spirit and a pure heart.

The great horror of my cogitations was, that I could not help regarding the rebellious murmurings of my heart as a proof that I had more of the evil of my progenitor in my nature than I should find convenient in a world from which evil of all kinds was disappearing very fast. Destiny seemed about to drive me the wrong way, in spite of all my cleaving, to the good, the beautiful, and the holy.

It will be perceived that I considered myself a person of some importance. Was I not a member of the great

Christian family which one day I should have to enter bodily? I could not conceive the possibility of being altogether overlooked by those whose care extended to the heathen and the savage, who hailed the elsewhere proscribed slave by the name of brother, and, as it were, extended their arms to the outcast and the benighted of all lands. Already gathered into this fold, it was important that I should prove myself worthy of the high privileges that awaited me.

I was suspended betwixt this heaven and my own earthiness. If there were anything in the way to be resisted, I had an instinctive fear that the old nature would be uppermost,—that I should find a pleasure in resisting. It was a strange satisfaction to me then to rouse out of my usual quiescent state, and battle with imaginary wrongs and difficulties. If I believed this to be a device of the great enemy of souls, I felt little inclination to attempt its overthrow by doing battle with him.

I continued in this agitated state for more than a week, undecided what I should say, or to whom I should speak first; I thought that, being no longer a child—for I was nearly fifteen—I had a right to know such particulars of the past as concerned me, and I was resolved not to rest till I had obtained this knowledge. I still shrank from the idea of wounding my grand-father by my importunity, and Aunt Betsy had a decided way of putting me down that left me small hope of getting any information out of her. I resolved to question Uncle Stephen, as the one most likely to take a common-sense view of the matter, and the least likely to feel pained by any calling back of the past. Having formed this resolve, I put it into execution the next time we were alone.

"Uncle Stephen," I said, "I wish to ask you a few questions. Don't you think I am old enough to know a little more about myself?"

"About yourself?" said my uncle, gruffly. "I thought you had been pretty well enlightened by your grand-father on that subject. Has he not taught you to understand that you are a weak, helpless creature—setting aside your strong tendency towards wickedness? Have you a craving appetite that way? Do you want to hear anything worse?"

"You do not comprehend me," I said, disconcerted by his

manner; "I wish to learn something more of my family—of my father, for instance. Now, uncle, is he dead?"

"As a good Christian you are bound to believe that he is living; in any case, don't trouble your head about him."

"But I *must* trouble myself about him. I do not even know his name. If his memory is a disgrace to you, it is more to me. I am his child; and no one has a right to keep me in this ignorance."

"Hey-day! this is to be a strong demonstration, is it? Hark you!" he continued, grasping my arm; "whatever you do, don't fall into a fit of heroics about your father; he is not worth it. Suppose *I* was your father! would you think I had been a very kind one, eh?"

I could not say I should. I should have expected in a parent even more of the affectionate interest, and pleasure, and pride, that my grand-father had always shown in me. I remained silent.

"You would not, I see," he continued. "Yet there are worse fathers in the world, Margaret. The fact is, that according to your ideas of parental excellence, you never had a father. Of course there is, or was, an individual to whom you owe the boon of existence, and at the proper time you shall know all about him. Will that satisfy you?"

"No," I said, passionately, "it will not. You know I am old enough to understand that something dreadful is concealed under this mystery; that I am capable of feeling keenly whatever disgrace is in store for me; that it is a hard task to wait patiently where one has everything to fear, and nothing to hope. I cannot thank you for what you have done for me whilst you leave me in this defenceless state, open to the censure of the world to an extent that I may not comprehend. One thing I am determined about—I will not again quit this house until I know what it is that may make others shrink away from me, as Lady Leigh did the other day."

My uncle fairly started. "Now you puzzle me," he said. "And you really have retained that circumstance, and set about calculating your chances in life? Why, you intuitively worldly little person, where did you learn all this?"

He spoke in a light, mocking tone that irritated me. It

seemed cruel to trifle with me in such a matter, and I turned away with proud, angry tears in my eyes.

"Come, come," he said, passing his arm round my neck, and drawing my averted face towards him; "what you ask is quite right, Margaret, and if it had rested with me alone you should have known everything long ago. As to the world—go out into it, and lift your head up in it, and be as proud and independent as you like—there is nothing to bring shame upon *you*. But we must do nothing without your grand-father's knowledge, Margaret; I will speak to him; and at any rate you shall know all in a few days."

He kissed my forehead as he spoke. Uncle Stephen had never exhibited so much kind feeling before, and coming upon me then in my extremity, I seemed overwhelmed by it. I sat at the table and wept.

"My poor child!" he said, bending over me. "If you had been left more to my care, this would not have been. But it is not too late, and I am thankful to see that you have common sense. I can deal with *that*. Trust to Uncle Stephen, and keep quiet."

I cannot say that I kept very quiet, but in some way Uncle Stephen had reassured me. I might enter the world, as I wished, with my head erect, not bowed down by an involuntary humility; and my chief terror being taken away, the excitement that was still upon me was comparatively painless.

Aunt Betsy, who kept good hours, always saw me safe in bed and took my light away. On the night following my interview with Uncle Stephen, I felt too restless for sleep, so I got up and dressed myself. I knew that my grand-father always sat up late, and I was inclined to join him. I knew that I could presume so far on his indulgence; but Aunt Betsy's room was between us. I listened at the door, and found from her regular breathing that she slept; and then, with my shoes off, I passed through softly, down to my own room. It was called mine, because my piano and all my school-books were there, and I had always pursued my studies in it. It was divided from the sitting-room by a thin wooden partition, the two having originally been one room; and the light streaming through the chinks of the

door assured me that my grand-father was up. I was stooping to put my shoes on, when the outer door opened, and some one entered. I soon discovered that it was Uncle Stephen, though no one spoke. I saw his shadow moving about. I knew his step; and presently I heard him draw a chair to the fire and sit down.

There was a strong temptation upon me to stop and listen to their conversation. I thought it very likely that something would be concealed from me in any revelation that might be made, and I tried to persuade myself that it would be right to arrive at the truth by any means. I was not hard to persuade, though I lingered with a burning blush upon my face, feeling that I was doing wrong. I trembled so that I was compelled to lean against a chair, and in the deep silence I could hear the beating of my heart. Several minutes elapsed, and then I heard Uncle Stephen speak as plainly as if I had been in the room.

"You have a more than ordinarily spectral look about you to-night, Thomas Marples," he said, "I wish you would try to be as like a mortal as possible, in order to accommodate yourself to my poor clay, for I feel altogether out of sorts."

"What is the matter?" asked my grand-father.

"The matter! nothing is the matter with *me*. I should be right enough, if it was not for other people. It is you that I expect will be all wrong by-and-by, and then of course, I must suffer."

"If there is any new sorrow in store for me let me know it," said my grand-father; "I am prepared."

"There! how I do hate the stoicism of Christians; the pertinacious putting-on of the crown of thorns! Why don't you rip out and say, 'What the devil's the matter now!" then there would be some hope of you."

"Ours is a strange companionship," said my grand-father; "I have been musing about it to-night."

"Not stranger than most of the companionships of this world," said Uncle Stephen, "and far more honest. Look at the thousands who, professing the same belief, do not expect from one another any of the fruits of it; men of the world who patronize religion and hold it up to contempt at the same time; who knowingly enact a daily lie, professing

themselves to be members of a church that insists upon humility, and pronounces a curse upon covetousness, yet with all the might that is in them scrambling for precedence and wealth, reckless whom they trample down, or in what company they rise. We at least have a disinterested respect for one another; we represent the two extremes of belief and unbelief, and we marvel alike at the inconsistencies around us. We do not spare one another either, and our out-spoken differences help to bind us together. Is it not so?"

"It has been so to a certain extent; we at least know how far we can trust one another. There is a point at which we stop, and there distrust begins, and sometimes we marvel how we came to be united so closely."

"That is, you do; I never marvel at anything. You speak with your wonted sincerity, Thomas, and I like you for it. Your old fear of me is coming back tenfold. I am glad of it; I want a hold upon you somewhere. You are going to far on the wrong road, and there is no one beside myself to arrest your progress. Now you are older than I am, and I number fifty-seven years: how much longer do you propose to live?"

"I have entered upon the last term of years allotted to man, and may not reckon upon a single day."

"And you feel easy about leaving yonder child to the tender mercies of this world?"

There was a pause: my grand-father did not speak, and Uncle Stephen resumed.

"You do *not:* that is right. A clever world it is in many respects—full of science, and philosophy, and steam—full of religion, too, and philanthropy on an imposing scale; but, somehow, there is a dearth of the small change of humanity, that makes it a barren place to the ordinary strugglers for bread. You know no more of this world as it really is than a child—you that pretend to teach others. An old-fashioned dread of evil has prevented your doing any good: your only struggle has been after resignation—contentment with things as they are—the most fatal of all errors."

"To what purpose would you have me rebel?" said my

grand-father. "Sorrow enough, wrong enough, I have had, God knows; if I can still bide His time, why should I trouble myself more and more?"

"You speak as if you had only yourself to think about. Your panacea for all earthly evils, like our modern pills, won't suit all constitutions. Content yourself as much as you like with sorrow and wrong, but allow others to resist both, if they like—and can. Confound it, what an odd doctrine you have been preaching all your life! Fancy a nation glorying in its poverty, boasting of its weakness, parading the contempt in which it lies as a special mark of God's favor! To this state Christianity would have brought us, if in all times there had not been men wise enough to see the folly of conforming to its doctrines. The madness is not less when individuals bring themselves or others to this state. This is a sin upon which the world sits in judgment."

"To what purpose is this exhibition of the cloven foot to-night, Stephen? Why, before the world, do you still profess to honor Christianity?"

"Because I would not bring upon myself the rabid wrath of pretenders; because I like to convict them in their pretension. I gave some of them a few hits to-night at the club, when the health of the new mayor was drank. I did not empty my glass, but proposed an amendment of the toast, and drained the dregs in honor of his private character as a good brother, &c."

"Oh, Stephen, you should not have done that?"

"They hate me for it, and would kick me out if they did not believe me to be rich. I like to see them writhe and fawn at the same time, and know how little reason they have to do either."

"You make me shudder. Such a life in the world, and no life in God! I was hoping, too, that through my humble means He would touch your heart. You disappoint me, grievously, Stephen."

"You have done your best to convert me; let that reflection console you. You cannot say that I have not been a patient listener. Have I ever deceived you in anything!"

"No Stephen, you have kept good faith with me

You were a kind friend when others turned away from me in my trouble, or remained only to make it more bitter."

"I will be fair and open with you to the end. I came to speak with you about Margaret. It is one of your fallacies to suppose that she is quite happy."

"What sorrow is there to disturb my child?"

"What is the power you suppose yourself to possess over the mind that you have tried to prepare for anything but the battle of life?" said Uncle Stephen. "Child! she never was a child; her whole brief life has been marked by earnest purpose and passionate thought: her mind is vigorous and active, and you might as well try to bind the surges of the sea as check the free flow of its thoughts. This fair page, which you are so fearful of soiling, cannot remain a blank. With what is it to be filled up—with the truth, bad as it is, or with lies for ever?"

"I have taught her nothing save the truth," said my grand-father.

"Her whole life has been a cheat, and no one knows it better than yourself. You have taught her to believe that the world is full of truth, and goodness, and mercy; and she will have to be rudely awakened from a life-dream. Think of her reverence for those who regard her as an unclean thing—who would not touch her with the hem of their garments! Could she conceive from any thing you have taught her, that the cold, thin blood flowing in Lady Leigh's shrivelled veins would boil up with indignation if she approached her even as a fellow Christian?" Yet this woman is zealous about missions, and professes to have a tender care for black souls. Pooh! what humbug it is!"

"I thought you had some news for me," said my grand-father, after a pause.

"It is this: yesterday Margaret again questioned me about her father. I can put off her inquiries no longer, and I have promised that in a few days I will tell her all."

"You shall not!"

"I will! The fact is, she *must* enter the world; must know it as it is. Why not start her fairly and honestly?"

"With some of your cold, cheerless philosophy, I suppose,

making a darker wilderness of this world, and a blank of the next."

"Nay," said Uncle Stephen, "I promised years ago that I would not interfere with her religious belief. I never promised to keep her in the dark about actual facts. You are aware, I suppose, that Colonel Leigh has arrived, and is now at his mother's house. The mayor and corporation talk of inviting him to a public dinner in honor of his glorious campaign in India. On Sunday, his uncle, the Dean, preaches, and you may expect to see him at the morning service with all his honors thick upon him. Up and down the town men are vieing with each other as to the best method of paying him respect."

"All this is nothing to me," said my grand-father.

"We have made a fair start of forbidden subjects," continued Uncle Stephen, "and the very necessity of things must drive us on. It has often struck me as odd, that Christians, even such as you are, seem to think less of the backslidings of their brethren than unbelievers like myself can do. It is a marvel to me how yonder Dean can receive this man, his nephew, with open arms and evident exultation as he does; how he can mount the pulpit and preach what he professes to be the word of God before him, and never for an instant think of admonishing him on neglected moral duties; never even himself recognising their existence. Now, if I were a Christian, I could not sit to hear that man preach; I should have the mocking laughter of devils in my ears. As it is, I mark and inwardly digest, after a fashion that would astonish some of your high churchmen. I should like to put to Colonel Leigh the question I have put to you sometimes—what is to become of this child?"

"Stephen Leath," said my grand-father, "I must desire you to leave Margaret in my hands. What it is necessary for her to know I will tell her myself, but not until this man has left the place, which he soon will do. The Lord help me, for my way is dark and I have only His light to guide me!"

"I wish you would be guided by the light of reason and common sense," said Uncle Stephen. "Well, I know it is of no use talking to you. As to Margaret, she has my promise,

as I told you. I consider it a duty to let her know all the truth."

"This must be done under the Lord's guidance," said my grand-father; "you must leave her to me."

"She is not to be put off much longer," said Uncle Stephen. "We shall see."

I heard him put on his greatcoat and walk out without saying another word: and then the tremulous voice of my grand-father arose in earnest prayer.

CHAPTER II.

It was a very bleak night in the depth of winter, and I had been standing in the cold and the darkness; but it was rather an inward chill, striking to my very heart, that made me feel as if my blood had turned to ice when I attempted to move. I had learned from the preceding conversation that Uncle Stephen was not a Christian, and the knowledge seemed to freeze me with horror. It was dreadful, too, to hear him bring accusations against Christians, which my grand-father seemed incapable of answering. Then, in some way, and in spite of myself, my sympathies seemed to go with Uncle Stephen. There was an openness about all he said that commanded respect; he evidently had my interest at heart; and from him alone there seemed a chance of my learning all the truth. Then this Colonel and Lady Leigh seemed in some way connected with my early history. It was possible that, through my parents, I had received some wrong at their hands, and, if so, I felt well inclined with Uncle Stephen to resist them.

The low, earnest tones of my grand-father's voice were still sounding in my ears when I crept back to my own chamber. I had taken a candle with me, and I tried to recollect and write down the conversation I had heard. It was altogether painful and bewildering; and, after all, what I could not help considering the lost state of my uncle was uppermost

in my mind. I felt that I must be careful about receiving impressions from one who could only be a blind leader of the blind, the more so as the natural corruption of my own heart seemed likely to incline me to error. I was quite conscious of being deficient in the humility and strong faith that made my grand-father patient under wrong and affliction; but I was earnest in my wish to lead a life of righteousness in Christ, even because no worthy ambition, no noble purpose could be pursued out of it.

I fell asleep at length, oppressed by this chaos of thought, and Aunt Betsy aroused me early with a rebuke for my idleness. My grand-father had gone out, and we breakfasted together. It was easy to see that Aunt Betsy had got something on her mind. She was unusually silent, and I caught her looking at me several times in a strange way. She surprised me at length by passing her fingers through my hair, which curled naturally.

"You don't take proper pains with your hair," she said. "Whilst you were a child, I used to wash it every morning, and just pass it round my fingers, and it curled beautifully. To-morrow morning I will do it myself again." This notice of my hair was the more surprising, because Aunt Betsy had frequently told me I spent too much time about it, admonishing me not to think too much of my personal appearance.

"I bought a new-ribbon for your best bonnet yesterday," she continued, "for the one you wore all last winter is growing shabby. Fetch the bonnet down stairs, and let me see you trim it nicely."

Aunt Betsy had been a dressmaker in her young days, and she had taught me to make everything for her and myself. I fetched the bonnet, a brown straw one, stripped off the old trimming, and commenced adorning it with the very pretty brown-and-amber ribbon that my aunt produced. I had some difficulty to please her with my taste. She wanted it to look as becoming as possible,—another singularity that I was unable to account for. When I had at length finished, and put the bonnet on, she turned me round admiringly.

"You need not be ashamed to show your face," she said, tossing her head as she motioned me towards the looking-

glass. "You are none the worse for being a Marples. Your mother and grand-mother were both handsome, and you are like your grand-father. I don't see that you owe your good looks to anybody else."

This strange outburst of feeling on the part of Aunt Betsy led me to survey myself more intently than I had ever done before. I was tall for my age, and rather stoutly built. I was certainly like my grand-father. I had the same broad forehead and large brown eyes, looking darker because of the long, black lashes that overshadowed them. My face was oval, my nose straight, my mouth small, with lips delicately chiselled, and terminating in a round chin. My complexion was fair and clear, with a heightened color, and heavy masses of curling brown hair formed a sort of framework to a not unflattering picture. As I stood gazing, the red blood mounted to my forehead, and I turned away with a sudden sense of shame and annoyance at having so readily been betrayed into an absurd admiration of myself.

"You always told me, Aunt Betsy," I said, "that good looks were only skin-deep."

"And that is true," said Aunt Betsey, "of the beauty that young girls only think about. There is something beyond that that proud people seek to keep to themselves. Never mind. To-morrow you shall wear your brown merino dress and mantle; and I wish you would give up that foolish way you have of looking so humble before strange people. Hold your head a little higher, if you wish that others should think well of you. If you help the world to beat you down, you may keep down."

This was so unlike what I had ever heard from Aunt Betsy, and so like what Uncle Stephen had said, that I was more and more bewildered. This new doctrine suited me very well, but the ready adaptation alarmed my conscience. The mild teachings of my grand-father, strengthened by his example during so many years, had taken less hold of me than did this more congenial law of liberty in a few hours. Taught by him to distrust my own heart above all things, I could not help thinking that there was something wrong about my new advisers and myself also.

On this day when my grand-father came home to dinner,

he told my aunt that he wished her and myself to attend St. Mary's Church on the following morning instead of the cathedral, where we usually went. Without replying, Aunt Betsy contrived to express a very decided objection to this plan; she sat fuming and tossing her head; and when my grand-father went out he thought it necessary to say, "I expect to be obeyed in this matter."

I continued groping in the dark, troubling myself with profitless speculations. Had the Colonel Leigh of whom I heard Uncle Stephen speak, anything to do with this prohibition? I could only conclude that he had, and having seen thus far into the mystery, I could scarcely control the strong excitement that urged me to seek further.

I did not see Uncle Stephen that day, and I passed the evening as usual with my grand-father in scriptural reading and prayer. I felt like a culprit when he placed his hand on my head and blessed me, and crept to bed bewildered by my feverish thoughts about the world.

I did not sleep, but lay imagining all kinds of things, never coming near the truth. In the morning Aunt Betsy dressed my hair as she had promised, and altogether spent so much time about decorating me that I expressed a fear lest we should be too late for church.

"It is too late already," said Aunt Betsy; "we are not going to church this morning."

"Not going to church after all that trouble!"

I seated myself at the window and took up a book, but I did not see a word in it. The impatience that had been gathering in my spirit boiled up at so slight an annoyance as this. Scarcely acknowledged to myself there had been an idea in my mind that this day would be an important one; I thought that Aunt Betsy had not taken such pains about my personal appearance for nothing; I knew that her thoughts had been unusually occupied; that she had seemed determined to take her own willful course in some matter, and I had drawn a hope from these circumstances, that now failed me. Nothing is easier than to teach forbearance to those who have no immediate use for it. From the first moment that I felt myself aggrieved I had restrained my feelings only by a strong effort, and it would have been

difficult to persuade me that the meek endurance which I had admired in others was applicable to my own case. Alas! for my poor grand-father! he had sown the good seed amongst thorns, and the trouble of this world was about to choke it!

As I occasionally glanced at Aunt Betsy, sitting so quietly with her bible before her, it irritated me further to see that all traces of discomposure had vanished from her countenance, that she had relapsed altogether into her usual frigidity of manner. I believe my dislike to Aunt Betsy originated in this power of hers to sit for hours together noticing no one, and apparently caring for nothing, and looking so stern and determined about it, that one could not muster courage to address her. It was a relief to see her actively employed about household matters; for then she found a voice, if only to notice faults and correct them. There was a restless energy about myself that rendered this mood of hers particularly oppressive when we sat at work together. I could bear with my grand-father in his frequent fits of meditation: I knew that he was communing with his God, and the thought inspired me with reverential respect, if I did not sympathize with him to the extent that I imagined I did. But what in the world was it that so pre-occupied Aunt Betsy, or did she ever think at all? She was not eminent for piety; she never took up a book except the Bible once a week, and she was in the habit of thanking God that, having never married, she had brought no trouble into the world. This was her manner of informing me that *I* was a trouble. I could not suppose that it was of a nature to burden the mind in her case; and with regard to the additional drudgery that my presence in the world occasioned her, I tried to lighten it as much as I could. I thought of all these circumstances as I gazed at her furtively from time to time. She was evidently what is called a strong-minded woman. There was no nonsense, no weakness, about her. If she had been gentle and tender-hearted, I should have wondered whether what I considered her very amazing ugliness had not occasioned her much sorrow and disappointment in the course of her past life. As it was, it was evident that she did not think the less of herself on this

account, rather taking a pride in making the worst of what was bad enough; adhering to a most ungainly bygone fashion in dress, especially caps and bonnets. The one good feature in her character, over and above her housewifely trift and activity, was sincerity. She would let you know at once that you must expect nothing further or better from her than you found. There was no weak point about her to be taken advantage of for good or evil; her qualities of heart and mind bristled out like the quills of a porcupine, and you only fared the worse by seeking further. I as a child found all this out, and I had no particular admiration of the good faith that I could only wish might be broken.

Such as she was, Aunt Betsy was the only female of whom I had any personal knowledge, and I had a pleasure in contrasting her, so far as my opportunities offered, with others. At church and in the streets I encountered many matronly women with kind and smiling faces; many young girls whose countenances expressed joyousness or an inward complacency to which I was a stranger. I had only just begun to wonder why I was shut out from the free communion allowed to others, when the shadow of a terrible doubt fell upon me; and this doubt gave birth to the vague hope and the subsequent disappointment under which I sat chafing in my aunt's presence.

The clock was on the stroke of twelve, and neither of us had moved. In a fit of uncontrolable impatience I threw the book I held from me, rose up and looked out upon the garden.

"What is the matter now?" said my Aunt; "Are you tired of well doing?"

If the well doing had consisted in poring over the book, it was a misnomer, as I had not seen a word in it. I am sure I had never before set Aunt Betsy's authority at naught, as I did then by not answering her.

"You think yourself very ill used, I dare say," she continued. "We must get you out into the world, and then you will see. You may put your bonnet and mantle on now; I want you to go out with me;

I did not obey her so readily as I should have done a few hours earlier. My very vapory hope had evaporated; and

disappointment had wearied me; and an inactivity of mind succeeded, during which I felt little interest in anything. In this mood, after dressing myself, I joined my aunt.

She surveyed me attentively from head to foot, seemed satisfied, and desiring me to follow her, walked out, locking the door behind her. As we walked up the long lane that led into the cathedral-yard my interest revived. I might well wonder whither we were bound, considering that we had no acquaintance, and that the Morning Service at church was nearly over. We met no one; but on approaching the cathedral we saw several carriages waiting for their respective owners. Aunt Betsy walked round to the western front, and paced backwards and forwards, frequently looking up at the clock; suddenly she seized my arm and dragged me towards the usual entrance. She ascended the steps and stationed herself by the door, still holding me fast. One of the carriages had drawn up, and in the footman who stood at the open door of it, I recognised the man who usually attended Lady Leigh. My heart was already beating rapidly when Aunt Betsy said, in a deep whisper, "Would you like to see your father?" I had only just turned and fixed my eyes upon her when she stretched out her arm and said aloud, "That is your father!"

The personage at whom she pointed was a tall, handsome, military-looking man, of middle age, who was just approaching from the interior with Lady Leigh hanging upon his arm. I saw *her*, though I saw nothing else save him. I sprang forward and stood before them, so that I impeded their progress. I stood doubtless, in a very theatrical attitude; with clasped hands, and eyes expressing all the deep interest of my heart and soul. I heard Lady Leigh utter a shrill scream; whether she fell, or was carried away by some one, or walked away of her own accord, I never knew, but I did know that the tall man and myself stood alone for the space of a few seconds, face to face, and that, as I gazed, a dark frown gathered on his countenance. Then some one drew me away, and I heard the voice of my grand-father.

He led me into the interior and down one of the aisles. I scarcely felt his grasp upon my arm, or my own footfalls; I was as one in a wild dream. Yet I had a perception of

the truth, and the blood, that had just been chilled by emotion, burned on my cheeks and seemed to scorch my heart.

"How have you been lead into this folly?" said my grandfather. "You have not dealt fairly with me, Margaret."

I was about to reply impatiently, but checked myself. Amid all the tumult of my feelings I was enabled to take a common-sense view of the matter, and I had a strong will to do right when what was right became clear to me.—"Cling to them that cling to you," says Dr. Johnson, and I had at the moment a full consciousness of the wisdom of his words. My heart turned more than ever to this kind and pious old man, who had nurtured me so tenderly, though my very existence had probably constituted the sole disgrace of his own blameless life. Understanding in what true nobleness consisted, I was repelled at once and for ever by those who, if I had any claim upon them, seemed determined to disregard it and me.

"Do not be angry, dear grand-father," I said; "and do not fear me. I must have come to this knowledge some day, and it is better to know at once in what and whom I have to trust. I belong to you, and for the future you shall guide me entirely."

"God bless thee, my poor child!" he said, in a hurried, broken voice; "wait here until all the people are gone, and then we will walk home."

He left me, and I paced up and down the solitary aisle. I found fresh matter for reflection in what he had said.—Were Lady Leigh and her son quite free from blame, that they could thus walk boldly forth in the crowd; and what was the particular ignominy that compelled us to shrink from the gaze of our fellow mortals? I had a good deal to learn, and I was ready enough for the tempter when Uncle Stephen came up and tapped me on the shoulder.

"You are getting on," he said, "and presently you will understand this game of life, Do you yet comprehend what it is that is worshipped in this Christian temple?"

"Men profess to worship God in it," I replied.

"Right," he said, "that is what they profess, and nothing is easier than profession. You might have had a good illustration of their practices at the door just now, where the

congregation stood bowing and smirking before the Dean and his nephew, the Gallant Colonel Leigh. Men worship things essentially earthly, Margaret; money, position, fame, —nothing else. I wish you to understand the true value of this world's sympathy."

"You are speaking of a few," I said; "there are Christians in the world,—my grand-father is one of them."

"The only one I ever met with," said Uncle Stephen; "and what has he gained by it?—sorrow, and wrong, and contempt. Is it possible that you have never rightly understood the doctrine preached to you in these very walls—that there is a necessary connection between moral and material well being? Yonder Dean, or Archdeacon Dixon, will demonstrate to you the utter impossibility of poverty being combined with worth; and this doctrine has gone the length and breadth of the land, and is obliterating all traces of a creed obsolete except in its name. You have some sense about you, Margaret; you shall hear the story of your birth, and judge for yourself; you shall go out into the world, and tell me what you find amongst this Christian people."

"*You* are not a Christian, uncle Stephen," I said.

"And, therefore, you think I am prejudiced? How do you know I am not a Christian? Have you just discovered the fact, or did you surmise it years ago from my actions?"

"Nay, Uncle Stephen, you have always acted like a Christian towards me; I never understood so well as I do at this moment, how much I owe to you."

"Never trouble your head about names," said Uncle Stephen; "you will find enough to trouble you in this hard world. Never inquire into motives; if you meet with reasonable treatment from any human being, be thankful, and inquire no further. Beware of the vision of Christian communion that your grand-father has placed before you; there is no such thing in life, as experience will shortly teach you. If you would not be altogether despised and crushed down, respect yourself,—struggle for yourself. Put all prejudices aside; resist evil in every shape;—you have the stuff in you; be determined to rise, and then I shall feel that I have not bestowed my pains in vain."

This was the last doctrine I listened to in that temple of God which I never entered again. Uncle Stephen left me as he spoke, and when my grand-father came we walked home together. Neither of us spoke by the way, and when we arrived, we found Aunt Betsy busy as usual, and looking as if nothing had happened. Dinner passed over in silence, and it was not until we were all seated quietly together that my grand-father spoke.

"You have acted unadvisedly, Betsy Marples," he said; "but what is done cannot be undone. We now owe to this child an explanation of the past."

"I would do it again if it was to be done," said Aunt Betsy, in her determined manner. "It was right that the child should see her father; if they meet in the world now, they will know one another."

There was no further contention. I learned from both of them. and subsequently from Uncle Stephen, the particulars which I here give in the form of a detached narrative.

David Marples, the newly elected mayor of ————, was an important man in his native city. By a remarkable talent for pushing and driving in the world, he had acquired great wealth, and along with it much respectful consideration from those about him. The son of a verger of the cathedral, he had received his education at the parish school, from which he was transferred to a warehouse as errand-boy.

Rising by degrees, and shifting for himself, he at length set up as auctioneer, for which calling a certain amount of assurance and general knowledge of business matters seemed peculiarly to fit him. Entering into various speculations, he occasioned men to marvel at the rapidity and ease with which he acquired wealth, which finally flowed down upon him in a deluge, that went nigh to obliterate every trace of his obscure origin. Having himself an eye to this desideratum in whatever he did, David, rather late in life, united himself to the daughter of a rich Liverpool merchant, and thereafter flourished in full blown dignity at his handsome manslon within half a mile of the city.

Applause so naturally follows success of any legitimate kind, that it is no wonder David rose high in the consideration of his fellow citizens. It is a noble sight to see a poor man striving after independence; many instinctive yearnings go with him in a career that promises to take him out of all possibility of becoming a burden upon the community, and to open before him a large sphere of usefulness to others. But for one man who, taking this view of the case would feel humbled and disappointed to see such acquisition of wealth and power used only for the indulgence of selfish and animal ends, and the fostering of vulgar pretension, there are thousands ready to pay court on any terms to men so favored by fortune as David Marples.

It had suited Mr. Marples to forget, for the last twenty years, that he had a brother much older than himself; and the community had favored Mr. Marples by forgetting the fact to a great extent also. Indeed, nothing is so easy as to put poverty in the back-ground, especially in this free country; and the quiet, unobtrusive character of Thomas Marples had helped to bring about this state of affairs. Altogether unfitted for enterprise, being of a retired and studious disposition, he had readily yielded to the guidance of others in the matter of worldly occupation; and when, at a suitable age, his father found him a place as clerk in a lawyer's office, he offered no remonstrance, though the dry copying of legal documents was a monotonous task for one whose mind was peculiarly active, with regard to certain pursuits that would have been well enough for one who had no need to earn his own bread. Thomas Marples had about him every mark of a man destined to a life of obscurity. He was singularly pious, after the old-fashioned manner that makes a man patient and long-suffering; being too deeply impressed with his own short-comings to take invidious notice of the failings of others. This disposition had been fostered in his early years. His mother, though an ignorant, had been an eminently pious woman, who labored earnestly for the spiritual advancement of her children; and being possessed of a fine voice and some musical knowledge, he was early admitted into the cathedral choir. Fond of antique research, especially as connected with ecclesiastical his-

tory, the old cathedral itself was a rich mine of wealth to him. He loved to linger amid the spacious aisles, communing with times long past, and only exulting in the present because he believed on them had dawned a purer faith, to whose ultimate results in regenerating the whole earth he looked confidently. Taking his stand on God's word, no falling-short of that high standard of Christian life in church or laymen could shake his faith, though he saw enough to impart a sad tone to a mind otherwise inclined to be uniformly though sedately cheerful. This peculiar disposition, inclining him to a reserve that had nothing of moroseness in it, made him very unpopular with those of his own age who were incapable of appreciating, or even understanding his character. What little intercourse he held with them, confirmed this ill opinion. His meekness was construed as meanness: his horror of actual sin was a species of cant that was unendurable: and save that home-example bore him up. Thomas Marples had no outward encouragement to persevere in a course that threatened to mar all his prospects in a worldly sense.

Nevertheless, he led an active life in his own way. Everywhere scattered about this hard world, lie souls perishing through sheer dearth of spiritual help; hearts pining away through want of true sympathy; and amidst the very poor of his native city was opened to the eccentric young man a wide sphere of usefulness. Sorrow, and sickness, and death, threw aside many a door to him, through which he entered, bearing with him the light of Christ, and never failing to dissipate somewhat of the dense darkness he usually found there. For though religion was considered to be the staple commodity of the old ecclesiastical city of ——, infidelity and utter spiritual darkness had their strongholds in many an odd nook and corner, to say nothing of the more general spiritual indifference which seemed to stand in no awe of the legitimate upholders of a good which is not of this world.

And from amidst the very poor Thomas Marples selected as his wife a young woman, whose whole family had been suddenly swept away by a virulent fever, that during several weeks had kept the bells of the churches tolling. If theirs was not an ordinary courtship, it was one that bade fair for

a happy continuance of the sentiments that bound them together; for gratitude on one side, and pity on the other, was blended with an esteem for the character of each, that had sprung up amid scenes of death and desolation, whose impression could not be obliterated by time. And when, after the death of his father, Thomas succeeded to his office as verger, and saw his young family springing about him, he felt happy and grateful, trusting in God's good providence and his own exertions for the future. Far from envying his brother what was generally considered his good fortune, his heart was filled with a godly sorrow for him, knowing that the riches of this world take to themselves wings and fly away, and that he was cleaving to an unsubstantial good. It was a great grief to him, too, in his joy as well as in his subsequent sorrow, to feel that all brotherly communion with one so near to him was withheld. For the faith of Thomas Marples was destined to be tried in the fiery furnace of affliction, and one by one his children dropped into the grave, —the last survivor, a fair and fragile girl, giving small promise of being reared to womanhood. In this child, the affections of both parents centred with an intensity that frequently prompted Thomas himself to pray against yielding to the idol-worship to which the human heart is too much prone. Yielding to a presentiment that he should lose her, though in a manner different to what happened, he more sedulously applied himself to the task of sowing the good seed, and leading her thoughts to God. And the girl was a docile and gentle, and apparently earnest recipient of these teachings, which had always formed so large a part of her brief life. Brought up in seclusion and in constant communion with two earnest spirits, there was an air of refinement about her that added a grace to her fragile beauty,—a solemnity of thought that prevented her shy, timid manner degenerating into awkwardness. Over the mother's heart no such cloud as that which overshadowed Thomas Marples lingered. Already bereaved almost beyond her woman's endurance, the thought of losing this last treasure was banished, simply because it was more than she could bear; and she yielded, not always without self-reproach, to a feeling of pride in her daughter's beauty, which was talked of far

and near, and which frequently attracted the notice of the visitors to the cathedral, where she was often to be found at the side of her father, who had familiarised her with every record of the place. Much in this way had come to the knowledge of Mrs. Marples, which she did not repeat to her husband, and which made her own heart tremble even while the gratified vanity of a mother filled her eyes with proud, deep-drawn tears. The delicacy of constitution, united to a corresponding sensitiveness of mind, that had impressed Thomas Marples with a conviction that his child would die early, had only served, united with her beauty, to lead the mother to a belief that she was destined to rise out of her station; to carry the grace of her gentle manners and her piety to a sphere far above that in which she had been born. There was something too exacting and secret in this mother's pride to be borne easily; and to Margaret Marples, when she knelt down in prayer, came ever a conviction that she had strayed from the right way in encouraging hopes in which she knew her husband would not share,—thoughts that formed for the first time a gulf betwixt their free communion. He, too, had his secret; he had consulted a physician, who gave him little hope that Alice's life might be spared, though the symptoms of the insidious disease that had swept away the rest of his children were as yet only slightly developed in her. By day and by night he prayed for strength to communicate this worst sorrow to his wife.

Meanwhile the bloom on Alice's cheek deepened, her eyes grew brighter, and Thomas Marples listened night after night to the dry, short cough that broke the stillness of her chamber. He knew that the time was come in which he could delay his painful task no longer.

Alice had been invited to spend a week with the family of a farmer residing some miles from the city, and her father took the opportunity of her absence to prepare his wife for an approaching longer separation. But Margaret Marples had allowed her heart to wander too far away into the world to allow the two to weep together as those who are not without hope; and she rebelled against the dispensation with a pertinacity of despair that more than all his previous sorrow burdened the soul of her husband. Her first impulse

was to fly to her child, with a vague thought that by being near her she could detain her longer upon earth; but even while she was making preparation to go, a messenger arrived who was destined to prove to her that there are worse evils upon earth than the evil of death.

The burly farmer at whose house she had been staying, arrived early in the morning in a state of great perturbation. Alice, he said, had been missing since the preceding evening, She had gone alone in the twilight to visit at a neighboring farm-house, which, however, she had not reached. After sending there and not finding her, they had searched the country round all night. A shepherd-boy said he had heard the screams of a woman, and a laborer had noticed a post-chaise driving rapidly along the road just at the fall of the night. Was it possible that Alice had been carried away by force, and by whom, and for what?

God punishes with immediate stripes the disobedience of His chosen, though He bears long with the iniquity of them that bide His time. Margaret Marples fell, stricken alike by conviction and death, when she heard this terrible doom of one whom she had grudged giving to the Lord in her purity. Frail in health, and riper for the sickle than she had imagined herself to be, the mortal part gave way at once. Into the agonised heart of her husband she poured the full tide of her most penitential confession, and died with a prayer upon her lips for him and for the lost. The most just and upright amongst men have their times in which to cry—"All thy waves have gone over me," and so Thomas Marples cried now. He left the corpse of his wife to join in the vain search for Alice. Nothing further was to be learned except that the post-chaise was seen by others on its course, but the track was soon lost. Every means of obtaining information was tried without avail, and after weeks of vain effort and agonising suspense, Thomas Marples rested in a stupor of grief that left him helpless, hopeless, prayerless.

No heavier affliction could have fallen upon him than this. He had resigned himself to the thought of yielding his child to God; but to lose her thus in the world, young as she was —scarcely fifteen—hovering on the brink of the grave as she was; the thoughts that crowded upon him were too

horrible to be borne; and by day and by night his fast friend, Stephen Leath, watched him as he writhed in his strong agony, fearing to leave even him, great as had been his faith and trust in the Lord, alone with that mighty sorrow shaking his very soul in its helplessness as a reed is shaken by the tempest. In those terrible hours to which Thomas always dreaded looking back, Stephen Leath was a great stay to him. For though the latter was no believer in Christianity, and there was only the human sympathy between them, this was much at a time when most others kept aloof, or stung him by lamenting that Alice had not been differently brought up; by repeating all that had been before repeated about making a show of her beauty, and by dragging forward various prophecies that she would come to some such end. By shutting the door against this croaking, even when it came in the shape of Canon Dixon himself, Stephen stood his friend in good stead, at a time when he needed no aggravation of his sharp sufferings. He was the better able to perform those good offices, because he was generally supposed to be rich, and none knew better than he that such a reputation secured to him privileges that might be turned to account in aiding the oppressed. That no thought of using them for a selfish purpose ever entered his heart was some proof that he had not altogether strayed out of the right way.

This Stephen Leath, also the son of parents in rather humble circumstances, was an early companion to both the brothers Marples. Though, being himself of an enterprising turn, he might have been supposed to have had most sympathy with David, the younger of the two, a mutual dislike kept them asunder even in boyhood, whilst betwixt the elder and himself a strong attachment sprung up that survived all their after-differences of opinion. Stephen Leath seemed to tread fast in the steps of David Marples in the matter of worldly success. He was apprenticed to a silversmith and jeweller, to whose business he eventually succeeded; his only sister was married to an attorney, with whom she removed to London; and Stephen, in his bachelorhood and with his flourishing business, was looked upon as a man likely to acquire much wealth.

Betwixt him and his friend Thomas Marples there was the sympathy of congenial tastes. Both were eager in the pursuit of knowledge, both had great musical talent, and Stephen possessed a natural genius for the acquisition of languages, making himself master of several dead as well as living tongues. Whatever it was that in his worldly struggle had caused him to sink into the chaos of infidelity, he kept his own counsel, attending the church and advocating the cause of Christianity after his own caustic manner, and only confiding his real opinions to Thomas Marples, with whom he could not dissemble, and from whom alone he could bear contradiction or reproof. For respecting in the latter, what was with him a sincere practice, free from conventional profession, he could listen to his frequent long admonitions with admirable patience, and even rejoice at the actual good resulting from the belief of his unfortunate and single-minded friend.

And thus it happened, that when in his great affliction Thomas Marples seemed to reject all consolation, Stephen was the only one at hand to remind him that he was dishonoring the faith to which he had cleaved through life; and such a rebuke coming from such a quarter had its effect in rousing him, in bringing to his soul a startling conviction of its heavy sin in thus making nought before the eyes of an unbeliever of the rich stores of God's grace; and he forthwith girded himself up and went straight to Christ with his heavy trouble, and found the chaos of his thoughts shaped into a plan and a purpose.

For when the tumult of his mind had thus, in some degree, subsided, it seemed clear to him that the abductor of his daughter (he never for a moment imagined that she had gone away of her own freewill) was a man of wealth, and one who had some knowledge of him and his concerns; and bringing into review before him the families of note in the neighborhood, he fixed upon that of the widowed Lady Leigh, the sister-in-law of the Dean, and daughter of an earl, whose son, a lieutenant in the army and noted for his wild courses, had recently been down on a visit to his relatives. His suspicions fastened upon this man with a pertinacity that might not be put aside; and confiding them to Stephen

Leath, the latter approved of his determination to go to London, vowed that he would see him and his child righted if it cost him all he was worth, and took upon himself the task of shutting up the desolate house after Thomas Marples departed.

Alice had been missing two months when her father arrived in London. He proceeded at once to the Army and Navy Club and there obtained the lieutenant's private address, but it was many days before he could meet with himself. When he did at length obtain an interview, the well-feigned astonishment of the lieutenant at the charge preferred against him, his ready sympathy with the bereaved father, and above all, his solemn protestations of innocence, staggered Thomas Marples, and he was beginning to be ashamed of his suspicions in this quarter when he detected a glance of intelligence betwixt the master and his servant, who was present, that served to confirm them at once. He resolved not to leave the house until his child was restored to him, and the result was that he was handed over to the police, and on the following day brought before the sitting magistrate at Marlborough-street. Thomas Marples told his own tale, but he could bring forward no proof to sustain the charge; and when the lieutenant protested, "on his word of honor," that he knew nothing of the girl, the magistrate was satisfied, and the disconsolate father was warned not to continue the system of annoyance he had commenced.

He wrote immediately to Lady Leigh and the Dean, reiterating his own conviction and begging their interference; and a letter arrived from the latter to say that "if his nephew had formed an improper connection, means would be taken to break it off." Those few cold words, and nothing more. It was not known to Thomas Marples that the lieutenant was on the eve of proceeding to India with his regiment; he knew nothing of this intention until he heard that he had already set sail, and then he was beset by a new horror—had Alice departed with him?

Overcome by fatigue and distress, he was lying sick at his lodgings, when Stephen Leath arrived, bringing with him a letter from Alice. It was dated from a small street in Pimlico. Shame, and heart-broken sorrow, and sickness

unto death, had conspired to make it almost illegible. It stated that she had no money to take her home if she could summon strength or courage to return there; it spoke, too, of horrors from which she must fly at once or die, and she implored that her parents would see her once more. It was not long before the father received his fainting child into his arms; and then he and Stephen Leath listened to a tale of inhuman outrage that went nigh to drive them both mad. The child had never spoken with Lieutenant Leigh, only just knew him by sight, until she met him under that roof, where she had arrived in a state of terror that threatened her with instant dissolution. He was alarmed at her state and left her, and she was attended by the woman of the house, and soothed with promises of being sent home. She was kept a close prisoner, and not allowed to write; and one evening she fell into a stupor that she thought was the approach of death, but she awoke from it to understand that she had been fearfully wronged, and then she bowed down her head in deep shame, and prayed to die.

Unable to overcome her deep horror at his presence, the lieutenant ceased to trouble her with his visits, and at length a letter arrived from him in which he advised her to return home. She was too ill to undertake a journey by herself; she had no money, for he sent her none; and, above all, shame had bowed down her very soul, and she shrank from the thought of seeing those who had known her in her purity. In this state, the mistress of the house informed her that she must provide herself with other lodgings, or with means of payment; and she recommended a life of infamy: and then the girl's spirit was roused, and she wrote to her father.

Thomas Marples carried the wreck of his dying child home, and the thoughtfulness of Stephen Leath had prepared everything for their reception.

When David Marples saw fit to forget his brother, he resigned a sister to the same oblivion. Betsy Marples, being an only daughter, had devoted a large portion of her life to attendance on an infirm mother, who lived to a great age. Working hard at her business of dressmaking, she contrived to maintain an independence, of which she was proud, and on which she would not allow any one to encroach. Sharp

in temper, and altogether eccentric, she held little intercourse even with her favorite brother Thomas, and no one dared mention before her the name of David, of whose existence she was more oblivious than he could be of hers, as her subordinate place in the town, like his brother's, was a constant annoyance to him. It was a marvel to many, and to none more than Thomas Marples himself, how Stephen Leath had prevailed upon this hard-tempered and self-contained woman so far as to induce her to break through all the habits of her previous life, and entirely devote herself to her kindred in their sore extremity. The unhappy travellers found her in the home to which they hastened; all that was womanly in her nature was roused by the sufferings of Alice; and, if she could not supply the place of the mother that was lost, she would suffer no strange hand to interfere, but faithfully performed the duties of the place she had taken.

Alice lingered through four months, and died in giving premature birth to a female child. This child, contrary to all expectation, was strong and healthy, and Betsy Marples, now secluded altogether from the world, devoted herself to the task of rearing it. The townspeople readily fell in with the humor of her and her brother to keep entirely to themselves. There was a general idea that Alice Marples had taken a great liberty in going off with the nephew of the Dean, and the son of so dignified a person as Lady Leigh; and, though both stood aloof in lofty security and scornful silence, and would have been horrified at any one mentioning the circumstance to them as in any way concerning themselves, it seemed a matter of propriety that every man should set his face against that portion of the Marples family with whom had originated an attempt to invade the peace of distinguished people.

Thomas Marples himself voluntarily bowed down his head with humility. He had prided himself in an honest name, and his heart seemed to wither at the breath of disgrace. It was too late to seek for redress, and his religion forbade him to cherish feelings of revenge, and he felt that enough was known of the circumstances to claim for his child all the forbearance that might be hoped for from earthly judges. Going even amongst the poor and the afflicted less than was

his wont, he obtained the soubriquet of the "spectre verger," from the circumstance of being seldom seen except at his post. And as age crept on him, and the child grew, these habits of seclusion became more confirmed. Centering all his affections in her, and jealous of her happiness, he dreaded above all things her coming in contact with those who might taunt her with the stigma of her birth, and so overcloud her mind with the shadows of sin and sorrow before its impulses were trained or its energies developed. Margaret Marples, therefore, was brought up in solitude; and Stephen Leath, besides devoting himself more than ever to his friend, set himself the task of superintending her education. He found her of quick capacity, and began to take delight in his work. Leaving her religious instruction entirely to her grand-father, he labored hard to perfect her in such studies as would enable her to be a teacher of others; and her own diligence and natural bent towards inquiry and improvement were his reward.

This seclusion of the child, Margaret Marples, and this training superior to her station, which some way became known, was an additional offence in the eyes of many. It was remembered against Thomas Marples that he had brought up his daughter Alice in much the same way, in defiance of the remonstrances of Archdeacon Dixon, who had urged him to send her to the parish school, and subsequently into service. It amused Stephen Leath, who was too rich to be assailed in a coarse manner, to see how the general obloquy worked against himself; for he came in for a share of it. Men touched him tenderly on the subject of wasting his time and money in a mistaken care for others; and Archdeacon Dixon, in a very bland manner, admonished him on the folly of fostering pretence in people who could only be ruined by imbibing ideas that were unsuited to their station. Hearing all and saying little, Stephen Leath persevered in his own way until the child Margaret had nearly attained her fifteenth year; and then there came a rumor that Lieutenant, now Colonel Leigh, was about to return from India, loaded with honors, after an absence of fifteen years.

CHAPTER III.

This was the substance of what I learned, chiefly from Uncle Stephen. He was outspoken, because he wished to neutralise the effect of my grand-father's teaching, which led me to expect more from the world than I should find. My first feeling was an intense loathing for Colonel Leigh and all his kin, that extended to myself; so that I would gladly have poured into the earth the portion of blood I inherited from them. The outburst of my own scorn was too full and earnest to admit of a care about theirs, with the world to approve and back it. I was sufficiently sustained by contemplating in them the cold-blooded villany and ignoble subterfuge and unblushing mock-worship that excited my abhorrence, and to which I could not myself stoop. I was too young and inexperienced, too much accustomed to look at and reverence the word of God as it stood, to believe that such conduct could pass unreproved amongst a Christian people, much less receive general approbation.

I still distrusted Uncle Stephen, as one who evidently was strongly prejudiced against Christians and Christianity; the more so, when I learned from Aunt Betsy that he did not even believe in the existence of a God. If what he said respecting the world was true, I had more than ever need of God as a refuge from its injustice. His doctrine was so revolting to me, so altogether unnatural, that I could not help shrinking from him, even while I admired and respected his steady friendship for my grand-father, and felt grateful for the great care and pains he had bestowed upon myself, who had no claim upon him. There was some unacknowledged faltering in my resistance to Uncle Stephen's view of things.

In losing him as an uncle I had gained another, a man of wealth and reputation, an undoubted Christian; for he was a great benefactor to St. Mary's Church, which he constantly attended, and a promoter of missions; yet from this man I had never received any notice; I was until now quite unconscious of his existence. That he stood high in the estimation of his fellow-citizens, was evident from the fact of his having recently been elected mayor; that he had no sympathy with us was made equally clear by his being at the head of those who were eager to do honor to Colonel Leigh. Good Christians these men were considered to be, and our own private wrongs, about which the world cared nothing, alone enabled us to dispute the position. I saw enough to stagger one called upon to search so narrowly into individual practice as I was. Except that the name "Infidel" was a bugbear to me, all I knew of Uncle Stephen reflected high honor on his heart and principles, and I was ashamed to find myself shrinking from him, even more than I did from the so-called Christians, in whose profession I had no trust.—One thing seemed certain—the law of God was less regarded than from my grand-father's teaching I had supposed it to be; that other law of this world, of which Uncle Stephen had spoken, and from which I could hope little, ruled more universally. Well! there was a stern battle with life before me, and I had a strong, determined will, and a stout heart.

In the midst of many dangerous doubts and perplexities I learned much that it was good for me to know. More than ever I loved and reverenced my grand-father; I was compelled to admire his patience in tribulation; there was something sublime about his steadfast faith kept in the midst of fiery trial, and which the mysterious dispensations of this world could not shake. I felt that I had been unjust to Aunt Betsy; under the rough exterior that had so readily repelled me I had failed to discern the real goodness of heart, the straightforward sense of duty and right that had enabled her to break through the habits of years, and devote herself to uncongenial labors, and brave all the sorrow and disgrace that had fallen upon her brother's home. I cleaved to these two with my whole heart; I longed in my turn to labor for

them, to prove that the gratitude I felt was something more than the passing impulse to which I could give no words.

It was perhaps, well for me that I did not at once see all the disgrace of my position, all the disadvantage that it would prove to me in the world. I had to learn more of its customs before I could understand that every penalty of that position must fall upon myself; that guiltless as I supposed myself to be, I must stand in the place of the guilty, so far as its judgments were concerned. I felt the disgrace without allowing it to crush me, it was a cloud that I might break through, a load that I might cast off. I had youth and health, and, probably, a long life before me; in other places, and amidst other people, I should be judged by my own actions, and I had a semi-savage sort of pride in the thought of thus struggling and triumphing in my loneliness.

I was soon called upon to put my good resolution into practice. My unexpected appearance before my father had given great offence to the Dean: it was considered by all to have been a concerted plan betwixt me and my grand-father; it showed an inclination to prefer claims that were not to be thought about, and threatened a series of annoyances that were not to be borne. It is the peculiar privilege of the great people of this world, that they have little need to interfere personally with dirty work. There are plenty to do it for them in an underhand way, or to battle for them openly; and on this occasion, while the Dean and Colonel and Lady Leigh stood aloof in dignified silence, the whole staff of under-churchmen, with Archdeacon Dixon at their head, undertook the task of reproof. I was sitting at my music-lesson, a few days after that important Sunday, when the latter gentleman, without knocking, walked through the outer room into mine. He was a stout, portly man, with a particular florid complexion, a bustling importance of manner, and having altogether the self satisfied look that characterises those who occupy a good place in the world, and know how to make the most of it. I had never been exposed to vulgarity or impertinence; my grand-father, being a Christian, had the bearing of a perfect gentleman; and Uncle Stephen had a native dignity of manner, never uncourteous when most severe, that he rarely put off in my

presence. At the first glance I saw that I must expect rude treatment at the hands of this Archdeacon, who had burst upon me so abruptly, and who asked, in a blustering tone first, why I was idling my time there; and next, where my grand-father was.

I had risen up at his entrance, and I told him that my grand-father was not in.

"Where is your aunt?"

My aunt had heard us speaking, and appeared to answer for herself. I was going away, when the Archdeacon called me back:

"Stop here, Girl; I want to talk to you. Why don't you," he continued, "set that great wench to the wash-tub, instead of allowing her to waste her time in this way?—What do you think you are going to make of her?"

"Archdeacon Dixon," said my aunt, bristling up, as she very well could, "this is the first time that any one has taken the trouble to make inquiry about that child, and I think the least people can do is to let us take our own course with her. If she satisfy us that is enough."

"My good woman, you don't know what you are talking about," said the Archdeacon. "If you don't teach her to make herself properly useful, she must trouble somebody. Bless my life, you haven't a fortune to leave her! Now let me hear what she is fit for; Wouldn't you like a place, eh!"

"This was addressed to me. I was about to say that I was in my grand-father's hands and ready to do anything he wished, when my aunt interposed.

"She has not been brought up for the kind of place you would like to put her in, but she has been taught to know that she must earn her own living, and please God she will do that. You may go away, Margaret; for if there's anything more to be asked, I can answer myself."

I was very thankful for this order, and left the room. I heard their voices for some time after in loud altercation, and when my aunt rejoined me, her face was flushed and her manner agitated. She told me to go to my lesson again.

Every fresh contact with the world seemed worse than the last. The visit of the Archdeacon had left a very painful impression upon me. It showed me the manner in which

the world takes rather rough liberties with those whose lot is lowly, and placed another minister of God before me in an unfavorable light. I felt that I must yield a little more in Uncle Stephen's favor; that if all Christians resembled those I had hitherto come in contact with, I should be inclined to turn to him, and such as him, heart and soul.—I tried to resume my lesson, but could not. My mind was disturbed, and my thoughts wandered far away into the dark depths of the world, in which I anticipated I should have to undergo many changes, until, in my final self, little would remain of the dreaming, wavering creature I was then. Uncle Stephen had spoken of Christianity as a worn-out system; of its professors as men whose practice turned it into mockery. If this were true, I thought it would be a better world in which men rejected it altogether; because the habit of a daily lie in the many, left little chance for the sincerity of the few. Then, Christianity was exacting, it enjoined patience and forbearance under affliction and wrong; humility to the down-trodden; no turning again to the smitten; meek endurance and long-suffering to the death. From the little I had as yet seen, I understood how readily any earnest follower of Christ, whose riches were not of this world, might find occasion to put these virtues into practice. What a victim he might become to those who despised his belief, while they made use of it for their own ends! I dwelt upon this idea until it took a shape, and I saw my grand-father in his tribulation, and thought of Uncle Stephen's words when they conversed together. If poverty makes humility imperative, it should not, amongst a Christian people, make nothing of a great wrong; and I could not help seeing that if my grand-father had been rich, and Colonel Leigh poor, and, therefore, insignificant, the world's sympathy would have been with us. I saw all the mockery of Christian profession in those who suffered such things to be. My grand-father himself had not acted with sincerity; he had allowed me to think too well of the world, to express and cherish in my heart reverence for those whom he knew to be undeserving of it, and I could not consider this a small or excusable error, feeling as I did how much it had tended to shake my faith. Uncle Stephen

alone had not deceived me. I had found life and men as he painted them—with a rough hand and dark colors, but so generally true that there was no mistaking the likeness. The authoritative dictation and scornful manner of Archdeacon Dixon had worked a wonderful change in me in the course of half an hour. I contrasted my grand-father's feebleness with Uncle Stephen's strength, the one bending under a galling yoke, the other boldly ascerting his own free will; and in a paroxysm of overwrought feeling I extended my arms and uttered the name of Uncle Stephen, in a wild cry for help.

Deeply absorbed as I was, I had not observed that Uncle Stephen had entered the room from the kitchen. He took my hands in his, and held them fast.

"What is Uncle Stephen to help you in? What is the matter?" he asked. "I was just about to scold when you nearly knocked me down with that sudden outbreak. Why, your hands are hot, and your face is all in a glow; have you been asleep and dreaming?"

Aunt Betsy walked forward and answered for me.

"You should have been here a little while ago," she said. "We have had a visit from Archdeacon Dixon. You know his pompous manner, and how he likes to lord it where he can. Well, he walked straight into this room, and wanted to know why Margaret was allowed to idle her time, and asked what she was fit for, and if she would like a place."

"Oh, that's it, is it?" said Uncle Stephen, drawing a chair forward, seating himself, and still keeping hold of my hand.

"Yes, that's it," said Aunt Betsy; "that's what must always be where people won't or can't stand up for themselves. You know, Stephen Leath, that before I came here, I had a pride in my independence, and maintained it; no one dared say to me what Archdeacon Dixon did to-day."

"I know; I always said you were a brave woman, Betsy—one of the right sort—one that would neither take wrong nor do it. As to this child, if he has anything to say about her, let him come to me. I suppose his impertinence has put her in this fever. I'll let him know it mustn't happen again; your Uncle Stephen can protect you so far, Margaret. Confound the people! What a nest of hornets this Dean

and Chapter affair is! It would be pleasant getting to heaven without them. There, it isn't worth crying about, Margaret; and people who sit down to weep over their troubles are fit for nothing."

I sobbed convulsively, but only for a moment. I dashed the tears from my eyes, and lifted my head. "You see," I said, "they can labor to put down and degrade me—these people who will do nothing else! They are right in supposing I am old enough to earn my own livelihood. It is time I left this place, where I can only be a burden upon my grandfather."

"That is the right sort of spirit, Margaret," said Uncle Stephen; "but you must have patience,—your education is scarcely completed. As to the rest, I think I can now let you go into the world with some confidence."

"I shall go, expecting little mercy at the hands of Christians," I said. "I could pray that I might find all like you, Uncle Stephen."

"Or like your grand-father," said Aunt Betsy, sharply; "what fault have you to find with your grand-father?"

"There are none like him; he is too good for this world as it is. Better than I shall ever be; better than I *would* be. I will not lie down to be trampled on by orthodox feet. I will turn heathen sooner, for the followers of Mahomet do exhibit some traits of nobleness."

"What have you been teaching this child, Stephen Leath?"

"I! Nay, you may thank your high churchmen for these notions. Margaret is excited, and speaks under the impulse of the moment. You should have some sympathy with a spirit so like your own, Betsy; you would not like to see this child in the hands of those who would like nothing better than to bring her as low as possible."

"Would'nt they like it?" said Aunt Betsy, excited. "You know that in spite of Thomas, I have always said I hope to see the day when we should be revenged."

"The best revenge will be keeping out of their way, and rising in spite of them," said Uncle Stephen, placing his hand on my head in the caressing manner that had in the last few days become usual with him. "I predict a bright career for Margaret. In a few years most of these people

will be dead, and she will not think them worth remembering. I come to tell you that I am going to London in a few days, and I shall, perhaps, be absent a fortnight. You, Margaret, be diligent whilst I am away. Tell Thomas I shall want to see him in the evening."

He left us, and Aunt Betsy called me into the kitchen.

"You are getting into high favor with Uncle Stephen, I think," she said. "You may learn more from him than is good for you to know. What has he been saying to you against Christianity?"

"Nothing; he only speaks against those who profess it to little purpose, and he can say no worse of them than I find."

"All Christians are not alike."

"Are they not all alike in this place where my grandfather's long life of piety and humble usefulness has only gained him one friend, and that an infidel, because he is poor! where his brother is honored for the one recommendation of wealth! where such people as Colonel Leigh can commit any wickedness with impunity! If I find no better amongst the thousands in this city, what am I to hope elsewhere?"

"The people here are bad enough," said Aunt Betsy, "but that is not the fault of Christianity. It is because they have none of it in them."

"Has the Dean none, nor Archdeacon Dixon, nor Lady Leigh, who goes every day to prayers, nor David Marples, who you say has given a new organ to St. Mary's and gives hundreds to the missionaries? After all, true religion consists in such practice as Uncle Stephen's. You say he was a good son, a good brother, and—I myself feel that he has been a good friend."

"You are learning to talk too fast," said Aunt Betsy, in her harshest manner. "Uncle Stephen is one in a million for his way of thinking. If all these people were like him, without religion altogether, we shouldn't be able to live amongst them. Who amongst them would care what they did, if like Stephen Leath, they expected to lie down at last and go to dust like a dog?"

Her words fairly made me start. I had never taken this view of the case; on the contrary, I had been pleasing

myself with the thought of future punishment for these people, and reward for Uncle Stephen. From this too absorbing present my thoughts wandered back to the noble men and women of whom I had read, whose lives, sometimes through storm and darkness, bore testimony to the truths of God, and whose deaths glorified Him. I considered my own weakness, and felt the extent of my folly, and that night I prayed fervently for grace to keep me in the right way. Several days passed quietly. Uncle Stephen, as I continued to call him, had gone to London, and the more than usually serious manner of my grand-father, and his frequent allusions to the great danger and sin of doubt and unbelief in matters pertaining to God, led me to suppose that Aunt Betsy had alarmed him by repeating the sentiments I had expressed. In his own quiet way he selected for our reading the noblest examples of Christian life, and I felt ashamed that it was deemed necessary to go over this ground once more, for the express purpose of convincing me that the believers in Christ were capable of acting worthily. I felt this without recovering from the shock I had received. The persons I was called upon to admire had been long dead, and I had yet to find their likeness amongst the living. I could only be content to hope on, and search further, without giving up my opinion of those who had excited my disgust. "It must needs be that offences come, but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh."

Uncle Stephen had been absent a week when I was one day surprised by the entrance of a strange man into the house. He accompanied my grand-father into every room, and I soon found that he was taking an inventory of the furniture. This puzzled without alarming me. I wondered if my grand-father had any thought of leaving the place, but that seemed too good news to be true. I was sewing in my own room, and I took my work into the kitchen in the hope that Aunt Betsy would say something, but she was unusually busy, and took no notice of me. The inner door was open, and I saw the man pause beside the piano.

"This," said my grand-father, "belongs to Mr. Leath," and they passed on. During the time they were in the

kitchen, my grand-father glanced wistfully at Aunt Betsy as the man was inspecting a dresser.

"This," he said, "belongs to my sister. I scarcely feel that I am doing right by letting all these things go together, Betsy."

"Say no more about it," said my aunt. "I have cast my lot with you and the child; if you go, I will not be left behind."

Joyful news! We were, then, going somewhere; perhaps to join Uncle Stephen in London.

The knowledge that at all events we should quit that place satisfied me, and I sat in a silent trance of happiness, well content to wait patiently until I might learn more. It was not until we were all seated after tea, in what may be called my grand-father's study, that either he or my aunt showed any intention to enlighten me, and I was determined to ask no questions until one of them had spoken. It was a rough winter night; hail mixed with rain rattled against the upper windows, and the shutters below shook in the strong blast.

"Draw your chair nearer the fire, Margaret," said my grand-father; "we must have a long talk together to-night. I wish you to believe that I have always done my best for you; that, more than anything else, I have your interest at heart in what I am about to do. You have sometimes thought that I was not quite sincere with you, that I kept you too much and too long in the dark:—that was respecting the past. It concerns you to understand clearly what are your prospects in the future. I will conceal nothing from you, not even what may give you pain. I have lost the means of maintaining you here, Margaret; I have been dismissed from the cathedral."

My heart sank at once. It was necessity, then, not choice, that was driving him away; and—miserable me—was not I the cause of this injustice to one who had grown old in the service of the church?

"What makes you turn so white, child?" said Aunt Betsy. "You must not fear to look the future in the face, or to work."

"I fear neither," I said; "but it is I that have brought

this evil upon my grand-father in his old age. I wish I had never been born!"

"You are wrong altogether, Margaret," said my grand-father, gently. "Listen to me. You have strong feelings, and you yield to them too readily: this habit will lead you into all kinds of error. The fault lies altogether with those who originally refused to recognise their own sin, and who were reckless about overwhelming others with it. I was prepared for what has happened, years ago. It is true, Margaret, that the Dean has looked upon me with an unfavorable eye ever since your birth, and your sudden appearance before your father—as he believes with my consent—tried his endurance too far. I do not regret that circumstance now; I do not murmur against any one. There are better modes of remedying evil. In the first place, we would not—any of us three—change places with these people. That is a wonderful advantage. We all have good health, and even I have some strength left: I am strong in the hope of God's help. I am not compelled to go away in a hurry, but I think it best to leave this place at once, and go where we shall be better able to help one another. We shall go to London. I have a little money, and I shall obtain more by the sale of the furniture, which Jackson will take at a valuation. When we have settled down, we shall have time to look about us."

I began to be more hopeful. In London I should obtain employment, and the thought of being enabled to help my grand-father reconciled me to anything.

"And we shall see Uncle Stephen in London," I said.

"I was coming to Uncle Stephen," said my grand-father. "He has been a kind friend to you and me, and we both owe him gratitude and respect; but there are many reasons that for the present forbid us holding any communication with him. I have no need to fear speaking openly of his principles, lest they should throw Christianity into the shade; you have found him merciful where others with better light have been unmerciful; but he would prove the worst enemy you ever had, if he instilled into you notions that would lead your heart from God, and peril the loss of your immortal soul. I do not distrust Stephen Leath; it is my very faith

in his straightforward dealing that makes me resolve to keep you out of his reach. When he first undertook the task of educating you, he promised not to interfere with your religious instruction, and he kept his word, as I knew he would. The other day he apprised me that as you had arrived at an age to judge for yourself, and especially as you seemed to have conceived a disgust for Christian dealing, he should no longer keep silent, but give you a chance of discerning betwixt the true and the false according to his own views. I was again bound to believe that he meant what he said, and my resolve is that, he shall have no opportunity of corrupting you, for corruption it is, Margaret, of the worst kind, when men attempt to prove God a liar, and to put in place of His truth their own blind and merely instinctive notions of what is right. I have labored to bring you up in the fear of the Lord, and to see you fall away from it would break my heart. Only a little longer I may be with you; let me depart with the hope that we shall meet again."

I threw my arms round my grand-father's neck and wept. This earnestness cut me to the heart, and I could not bear that he should doubt me.

"Have I not been altogether taught by you?" I said; "have I not seen how God can be all-sufficient to them that have nothing to support them in this world? Do not fear me!"

"God bless you, child!" he said: "all my prayer is, that you may not be tempted out of the way."

"But we need not be unkind to Uncle Stephen," I said. "In London, if he remains here, I shall see nothing of him: we may correspond with him?"

"There are reasons why we should not do even that," said my grand-father. "Sit still and hear me. For many years before you were born, Stephen was in a flourishing way of business. He had a taste for travel, and was frequently absent on the Continent, leaving everything at home in the hands of his foreman. Whether he suffered in this way or not I do not know, but he did in another. His sister was married to an attorney, who frequently borrowed large sums from him, and for whom he became bound, just before his death, on the eve of bankruptcy. He lost thousands of pounds at that time, and was compelled to give up business in order to

avoid being a bankrupt himself. All this was not generally known, and people supposed he had retired rich. His sister was left with a young son, and Stephen had to provide for both of them. This young man, George Ratcliffe, has been brought up at the bar: he has been about twelve months in practice, and it is on his affairs that Stephen is gone to London.—Apart from the sum that he has sunk for his nephew and his sister, I know that he has barely enough to exist upon. If he comes to understand our troubles, he will insist upon helping us, and still further impoverishing himself. We owe him enough already: he has toiled and suffered enough, too, on our account. We must be independent: we will write and tell him this, and that if we prosper he shall hear of our prosperity. It is right that we should struggle for ourselves."

I could say nothing against this: I already owed enough to Uncle Stephen, and I pleased myself with the thought of sending him accounts of my prosperity as his best reward. Both my grand-father and myself wrote to him that night, letters which were to be left behind us, and then I was told that we should depart from —— in two days.

We employed the intervening time in packing up, taking amongst our ordinary luggage such relics of home as a portion of my grand-father's books and mine, and a few things that Aunt Betsy prized. This extraordinary movement, and the bustle of it, and the prospect of seeing London, and doing something for myself, so exhilarated my spirits that I seemed quite another creature. From the back windows of the house we had a view of the stately mansion of David Marples, embosomed in trees; and as I looked at it from the kitchen, I thought of him and Colonel Leigh, and gloried in the consciousness of owing them nothing: and from the depths of a proud, sanguine spirit came an assurance that one day I should be able to lift my head above theirs, even in this world. With the flush of anticipated triumph upon my cheek, I passed into the inner room. The complete abstraction of my thoughts unfitted me at the moment for any outward application, and as I stood idly, I heard Aunt Betsy moving in the sitting-room.

"The poor old man!" she murmured: "and he so fond of his books and quiet—this is enough to kill him!"

I needed bringing down from my proud thoughts of self. I walked slowly up to my bed-room and knelt in prayer, and wept and tried to humble myself. This woman, of whom I had thought hardly through so many years, was nobler than I: in the midst of her own tribulation she could think of the feeble old man, driven from the home that time had endeared to him, compelled to give up the habits of a long life; whilst I, who had brought sorrow upon both, was absorbed in selfish speculations. Although I seemed incapable of keeping myself in the right way, I was ready enough to follow it when it was pointed out to me; and sobered and saddened, I returned to my employment, and found my spirit strengthened by thinking more earnestly for others and less extravagantly for myself.

Though it must have been known to many that my grandfather had received his dismissal from the cathedral, few were aware of his intention to leave the city. Several poor people called, with tears in their eyes, to thank him for good services which they had the gratitude to remember; and one old verger bewailed himself so bitterly, and exclaimed so vehemently against the injustice that had been exercised, that all my grand-father's efforts to quiet him were in vain. Beyond this we had no leave-taking; we were quitting one desert place for another, and the confidence with which we went forth had yet to be tried.

It was quite dark when we quitted the house for the last time to go by the early coach. Even I experienced a pang of regret when I heard Jackson, the man who had charge of the furniture, lock the door behind us. Amidst my eager hopes I had not lost my fear of the world, and I felt it just possible that I might be taught to think more kindly of the home that had given peaceful shelter to my childhood. I clung closely to my grand-father's arm. He exhibited no emotion; and as to Aunt Betsy, when we arrived at the inn-yard, she bustled about in her usual manner amongst the boxes. The gas-light showed us three inside passengers, and there were two outside besides ourselves. When the coach at length started into the outer darkness, we could only guess from the sound of the wheels when it had quitted the paved streets of the city.

CHAPTER IV.

The day broke in a thick mist, that gradually cleared away, and before eleven o'clock the sun shone out brilliantly. The air was piercingly cold and frosty, chilling even my young blood, though I was well wrapped up. I was too much excited, however, to attend to this minor discomfort. Though I only saw in greater variety what I had seen before—houses and rivers, trees and fields, and very common-place looking human beings—I was disposed to be pleased with every thing. The sense of freedom communicated by this rapid whirling through what seemed to me interminable space, suited me admirably, and losing every regretful thought for what I had left behind me, wondering how I had so well borne the dullness and insipidity of my past life, I commenced castle-building on a larger scale, and annihilated all difficulties at will.

This mood continued till the coach stopped before a lonely farm-house, at which a parcel had to be delivered. I observed a miserable-clad Irish-woman in the road, with a child at her back, and three other's following her, half naked and shivering. I thought she was going to beg, and wished that my grand-father would give her something, but she approached a pump at which a man was filling a bucket, and asked leave to get water for a kettle she held in her hand. The man took no notice of her, but pumped on until he had filled two buckets, and then to my consternation, he deliberately threw the contents of one of them over the woman and children, completely deluging them. Mixed with the cries of the children was a loud, hoarse laugh, proceeding

from one of our fellow-passengers, and in which the coachman, who now came up, joined.

"Darn them Irish vermin!" exclaimed the coachman, "that just serves 'em right."

My grand-father threw some money to the shivering woman, and the coach passed on. The man whose mirth had first been excited by this scene, and who sat on the box, had been rebuked by him, and he now turned to reply.

"If it wasn't for such as you," he said, "we should soon be rid of these vagabonds. The popish devils! why don't they keep in their own country? If I had my will, I'd hang them up as fast as they come."

Here the subject dropped. Our other fellow passenger, who seemed from his dress to be a clergyman, was seated by himself at the back of the coach. He was a middle aged man, stout, with a sallow, unwholesome complexion, and he had a particularly gloomy, abstracted look. I had turned towards him in the hope that he would interfere, but he was looking straight forward with the same sullen and apathetic, expression of countenance; so that it was scarcely possible to suppose that he was aware of what was passing. Such scenes as I have described may not be common; but the whole affair, and the coarse mirth and brutality, and bitter animosity, and utter indifference which it served to exhibit, struck a chill to my heart. I was dragged down from the heights into which I had been soaring, and then a doubt fell upon me whether I had the strength of mind and purpose necessary to battle with the difficulties that possibly lay in my own path.

Thus veering about to all points of the mental compass, I found myself in London. I was not much impressed by any thing I saw, which was only a repetition of what I had seen before. There were the same houses and streets on a more extended scale; the same human beings in greater numbers. As far as we went, I saw nothing so grand as our own cathedral. The coach stopped to set down the clergyman, and my grand-father observing that we might as well stop there as anywhere else, descended also. Our boxes were speedily dragged from the roof, and we stood blocking up the pavement in the midst of the great crowd. I had fixed my eyes

upon the clergyman, who had undergone a metamorphosis that astonished me. His brisk movements and the merry twinkle of his black eyes which gave altogether a different expression to his countenance, made me almost doubt his identity. He was met by an odd-looking individual, who might have been a man or a boy—it was impossible to say which—dressed in ragged trousers, a coat that almost reached to his feet, and without a hat. His face, however, was wrinkled, and had a tough, leathery look, as if the skin was made of old parchment, and his small mean, cunning eyes, in a chance glance at myself, seemed to look me through. The clergyman tossed his sole luggage, a carpet-bag, at this personage, with the exclamation—

"Here, Jem, take that, and look sharp."

Jem obeyed both orders. I was about to withdraw my lingering gaze from these two, when both turned round and looked back at us, and the clergyman approached, and spoke to my grand-father.

"If you want any one to carry your luggage," he said, "here is a poor fellow who will be glad of the job. He has a truck which he could bring in a few minutes."

"The truth is," said my grand-father, "I don't know where to go;—to some inn, I suppose, in the first place:—perhaps you, sir, could recommend me to one."

"Do you make any stay here? Do you want a private lodging?"

"Yes."

"Then," he continued, glancing first at Aunt Betsy, then at me, then again at my grand-father, "perhaps you could be accommodated at the house where I live,—that is, if you are not particular."

"Any humble place that is decent will suit us," said my grand-father. I only fear that the abode you mention may be beyond my means."

"Ah, I see," said the clergyman, smiling and touching the sleeve of his coat, "all is not gold that glitters. I am compelled to lodge humbly myself; but mine is quite a respectable concern; religious landlady, and all that; you won't find a cheaper place at all decent.

"Then we thank you for your courtesy, sir," said my

grand-father; "and if you will lead the way we will follow."

"Let me see," said our new friend, taking a survey of the boxes. "Here, Jem, throw that carpet-bag here, and fetch the truck."

Jem obeyed and disappeared.

"Ever here before?" asked the clergyman.

"Only once," said my grand-father. "I am a stranger and a sojourner, for how long the Lord knows."

"We are all strangers and sojourners, and places that bear no resemblance to Egypt, or the wilderness, or Canaan, for there the multitudes were fed," said the clergyman.—"This is the modern Babel, of which Scripture does not give us due notice, in which all men speak a different language, only too well understood to mean the same thing—every one for himself. We are an odd flock to belong to one shepherd."

He stood against the wall with his arms folded, and in a shorter time than we expected, Jem made his appearance with the truck. Putting my grand-father aside, the clergyman helped Jem to place the boxes, and crowned them with his carpet-bag. He then politely offered his arm to Aunt Betsy, who accepted it with a grim, sidelong glance at him, and placing my grand-father and me foremost, he followed in this order.

We accompanied Jem and the truck through many devious windings and turnings, until he stopped at the door of a three-storied house, in a narrow, third-rate street, where the children were playing in the gutters and idle women were standing at the doors and leaning out of the windows. The clergyman took us into the house and introduced us to the landlady, who said she had two furnished rooms to let, which we might have on the condition of always paying a week's rent beforehand. We then went to look at the rooms, and the bargain was concluded, and our boxes taken up stairs.

Viewed by the light of a small candle, for it was four o'clock in the afternoon and growing dark, our new abode looked dismal enough. The furniture was scanty and mean, the walls dingy, and the fireless grates added to the general appearance of discomfort. Our landlady, too, was suffi

ciently repelling. The one recommendation of being religious scarcely atoned for the ungracious, distant manner, as if she was conferring an unwilling favor by admitting us,—for the particularly sour look, aided by a pair of suspicious eyes, and a mouth turned down most portentiously at the corners. Whilst she left us to ourselves, our fellow-lodger brought up from his apartment on the second floor a skuttle-full of coals and some wood, and, resisting all Aunt Betsy's importunities, commenced lighting the fire.

"You are tired, my good lady," he said, "and being a bachelor I am used to this sort of work. Jem goes all my errands, and if you want anything you may trust him."

Upon this hint, Jem was despatched for such necessaries as were required to make tea. He also fetched us coals and wood, which were deposited in a cupboard in one of the rooms. The Reverend Mr. Chaundy—as we understood our fellow-lodger to be from a card which he gave us—displayed a general knowledge of the place by directing us where to look for such things as were immediately wanted; and, declining my grand-father's invitation to take tea with us, he promised to look in for an hour in the evening if we were not too tired to receive him. Aunt Betsy, good methodical house-wife as she was, was sadly put about. She did not mind all the cups and saucers being odd ones, and we extracted a little fun out of the fact of the knives not being made to cut, but a teapot with a broken spout annoyed her so much that she was with difficulty restrained from opening a large box to get at her own. Altogether, however, we bore up pretty well, considering that the change we had undergone was worse than that from civilized to downright savage life; for every deterioration in the former is accompanied by an oppressive restraint, while the latter gives the perfect freedom that is more than an equivalent for difficulty. The first thing that struck me in our new abode was the general paucity of real work. The clearing up of our two rooms seemed merely child's play, so that I could not help wondering what was to become of Aunt Betsy unless she obtained some employment elsewhere. The buoyant hope of youth had again surmounted every difficulty with regard to myself.

Mr. Chaundy had made a favorable impression upon both my relatives; and, though his place of abode and his habits were alike odd for a minister of the Church, I do not think that either of them for a moment suspected that he was other than what he professed himself to be. My grandfather called a general council to consider the propriety and expediency of acquainting him with our object in coming to London, and asking his advice as to the manner of proceeding. Amongst the changes that had taken place, not the least gratifying to myself was that of being allowed to understand exactly what our position and plans were, and to have a voice in our future arrangements. For himself, my grandfather wished to procure employment as a writer for some attorney or law stationer, and for me either a situation as governess or an engagement as day teacher. He had intended to advertise; but, as that was an expensive process, it seemed as well to make some inquiries before he ventured upon it. Therefore, when Jem returned from an errand, my grand-father desired him to inform Mr. Chaundy that he should be happy to see him; and that gentleman shortly made his appearance in a very shabby dressing-gown, having lost all trace of his profession with his dress. Before my grand-father had opened the subject, he turned to me and said, smiling:—

"I fancy I gained nothing in your good graces this morning when you so eloquently, though mutely, appealed to me on behalf of the poor Irish woman and her children. You could not understand from my blank look that I had taken especial note of the astonishment, and disgust, and pity, expressed in your own, and which was so natural in one new to the ways of the world. Circumstances compel one to be self-contained as an oyster. I had no money to give, and battling with the prejudices of those men, would have been idler than fighting the winds. However, it was my sympathy with what you all seemed to feel that induced me to turn back, and accost you in the street."

After some further conversation on this subject, my grandfather spoke of his own affairs. Mr. Chaundy recommended that, instead of advertising, he should make personal application for himself, and try the register-offices for me.

"It may surprise you," he continued, "to know that there is in London a register-office for clergymen, at which I have now danced attendance for many years. What you saw this morning, what you may see any day in London, may lead you to suppose that no clergyman need be idle, and that is the fact. But monopoly on the one hand, and starvation on the other, makes our church system work badly. You see how I am lodged here, and the truth is, obtaining employment only makes matters worse. I was compelled to abscond from two curacies, and the one I have just given up was more than ever ruinous. I had eighty pounds a-year, upon which there were many claims, and a large vicarage-house on my hands. The incumbent, who has three or four livings, has a stall in your cathedral. Perhaps you know him—Archdeacon Dixon."

My grand-father acknowledged his acquaintance with this personage, and Mr. Chaundy went on:

"Very well. I unavoidably got into debt at the vicarage, and the Archdeacon himself preferred a claim against me which I could not meet. I determined to have an interview with him, and lay before him a plain statement of the case. You are possibly aware that he can bluster a good deal, and he contrived to throw all the blame upon me, by saying I had no right to accept the situation, knowing that I could not make it answer. The fact is, no curate can get on, or even exist, who has not property of his own. Our church management is a venal affair altogether, sir. Good God! it is terrible to pay so much for a mere helpless knowledge of all this selfishness and mismanagement, and the privilege of suffering under it without hope of change."

Mr. Chaundy, whose chief solace appeared to be smoking, having ascertained that, though my grand-father could not join him, none of us had any objection to the habit, took out of his pocket a short pipe, and puffing away at a great rate entered further into the details of his personal experience. This was continued night after night, and I compared all he said with what I had heard from Uncle Stephen. It was no proof of Christianity *not* being a worn-out system that a few privileged and grasping churchmen contrived to make a good thing of it for themselves. Mr. Chaundy went further than

this, expatiating on the different modes of preaching to different congregations (always with a large allowance to rich and respectable people,) in a manner that took great hold of me. My high opinion of Uncle Stephen's integrity was strengthened by what I heard, which proved that he had at least good reason for speaking and thinking as he did; and my proud determination not to be crushed down by the mock humility of others went largely towards shaking the faith that had been wavering ever since my first contact with the world. It did not mend the matter that Mr. Chaundy admitted Christianity to be a glorious institution; that its doctrines produced a gracious influence on those who lived up to them; the fact that not one in a thousand did; that the law of this world governed the multitude; that Churchmen, even more than others, scrambled after its rewards, told fearfully against its universality, that one proof of a divine origin to which I had looked. I examined the evidence for and against in a cool, dispassionate manner, considering how much I had anticipated that I had not found, and how keen was my conviction that upon the decision I came to, depended my future success or failure in life.

I have learned since then that few girls of my age ever enter life with such absorbing thoughts of their chief interest in it. I had been peculiarly reared, in a solitude to which no evil ever came; I had been well grounded in the doctrine of Christ, and taught to believe that the oppression of which I read in books was an impossibility in our day; and my peculiar situation, with its consequent revelations, had produced a terrible revulsion of feeling when I first came in contact with the world, as suddenly as if I had dropped from the moon. I was too rudely awakened from my dream of universal brother-hood; I was quickly disgusted by an insincerity that was generally understood and allowed; and there was something in the temper of my mind that made me quite as ready to stand on the defensive as I had been willing to respond to the cordiality and affectionate interest and goodwill which I had so needlessly been prepared to meet.

My grand-father lost no time; but on the following day accompanied me to a register-office which was pointed out

to us by Jem. My name and qualifications, and the sort of situation I wished to obtain, were written down, and then, after glancing carelessly at me, and referring to a list, the office-keeper observed that such a place as I wanted was then vacant in Wimpole Street. It was as teacher to five young children. The lady, he said, was rather particular; having recently had three governesses upon trial, none of whom had suited; I might, however, be more fortunate. We thought so, too, and as personal application was to be made, between the hours of ten and twelve in the morning, we determined to proceed to Wimpole Street on the following day. After taking me home, my grand-father proceeded to the house of a law stationer, to whom he had a note of introduction from Mr. Chaundy; and Aunt Betsy declared her determination to apply for needlework, not being able, as I suspected, to find work for the employment of her time.

Never were people more resolutely bent upon laboring for daily bread, and it seemed impossible to fail in this object. I compassionated the Rev. Mr. Chaundy, of whose dingy apartment I that day obtained a passing glimpse, and wondered how he, with all the sensibility of an educated man, and all the refined tastes of a learned one, could so well endure the privation and obscurity to which he was condemned, without hope to cheer him on, or sympathy to lighten the evils of his lot. In the course of the afternoon he sent me up a book to which he had made allusion the night before, and which I told him I had not read—"Don Quixote." Jem, who brought it, lingered as if he wished to say something; and I, to whom the study of human beings was newer and as yet more interesting than that of books, with which I was familiar, felt inclined to humor him. This man who looked so weather-beaten though not old, whose time seemed to be at the service of any or every body, who could be so respectful in the midst of his familiarity, so that there was nothing vulgar about him, uneducated vagabond as he evidently was, had already excited my interest; and wishful as I was to learn more of real life, I felt that even such a page as he could unfold to me would not be devoid of instruction.

"Do you live here?" I asked.

"Me!" he exclaimed, opening his eyes to the widest. "Well," he continued, "that's the right word, too; I do live here and nowheres else. I don't live in the cellar where I eat and sleep; I don't live in the streets where I work for them as wouldn't miss me if I dropped down dead this very minute. I live here with Mister Chaundy, and nowheres else."

"You like Mr. Chaundy?"

"I should think I do! Look here,—there's nobody else cares for me. I serve a many, but none says to me as he does,—'Jem, my good fellow, I like to have your honest face about me; I don't feel quite alone in the world when I see you, Jem.' That's what I call *living* for him and me. You'd hardly think it now, and him one of the clergy."

"Are the clergy usually so different?"

"Lor' bless you, yes. So grand and mighty—there's no getting at 'em. He's the first clergyman as ever spoke to me—that's what makes me think the more of it. 'Jem,' he says to me, 'when people are prosperous they care for nothing but theirselves.' Now when I pray I ask the Lord to keep him as he is."

"Nay, that is selfish. You would surely like to see him rise in the world as he himself wishes to do. Besides, being so kind as you say he is, what a benefit his more extended usefulness would be to others."

"You don't understand how it is," said Jem, earnestly. 'Prosperity spoils everybody; it would spoil him. If he was made a bishop on to-morrow do you think he would know *me?* I should think not! That's where it is; I can't afford to lose him no way;—you see I've nobody but him to look to."

"Have you no wife or children?" asked Aunt Betsy.

"No: what should such as me do with 'em? I was nothing but a poor foundling that nobody owned. I'd just sense enough to keep my disgrace and poverty to myself."

His words pierced my spirit like a two-edged sword. This poor creature, so sensible of the disgrace of his birth, might teach me a lesson. I only owed it to the kindness of a few that I had not been altogether abandoned as he had been.

I, too, ought to keep my disgrace to myself, and journey through the world alone.

"You see," continued Jem, "when I was young they used to send waggon-loads of children from the Foundling where I was, down to the factories. I was sent when I was seven years old, and a hard time I had of it, for the factories wasn't managed then as they are now. Bad usage, and bad living, and heavy work, made a cripple of me; and then they sent me to the Workhouse, where I wasn't treated much better. I ran away at last, and went to London. I begged money enough to buy a broom, and took to sweeping a street crossing. Then I took to going errands, but I couldn't get a place for want of a character. One day—it's ten year ago now—I carried a box and a carpet bag for a gentleman as come by coach. As we was going along I saw a poor sick looking woman with a lot of ragged children. I set the trunk down and put my hand in my pocket and threw her some copper, and the gentleman turned round and said:—'What did you do that for? ain't you poor enough yourself without doing that?' So I says, 'Master, I suppose it's because I am so poor that I did do that! I'm poor enough to feel for them that's poorer than I am.' And he said that was quite right, and gave the woman some money hisself; and when he came to his lodgings he took me into his room and made me sit down and tell him all about myself; and then he said: 'Jem,' just as kindly as he does now, for it was Mister Chaundy,—'Jem,' says he, 'I think I can employ half your time if you like to serve me, and I'll buy you better clothes.' It wasn't the promise of the clothes or the regular work, though I liked both, but the kind words, that made me jump at his offer. Now we've been together ten years. Master's got poorer, and so have I, but that only makes us keep closer together. You see we couldn't get on without one another."

"But you seem to have a bad opinion of human nature, Jem," I said, "since you think that prosperity could make your master forget you. Do you feel that it would have the same effect upon yourself?"

"I shouldn't like either of us to be tempted," said Jem. "That's all I think about when I say, 'lead us not into

temptation.' We're weaker than we think for, Miss; and I wouldn't like, either way, to lose the only friend as ever spoke a kind word to me."

I could readily understand how strong was this tie:—the only one who had spoken a kind word to him through a long life! And this bond of kindness, uniting two unfortunates, was it indeed so easily to be broken by the accidental elevation of one of them? Was this, one of the best aspects of humanity, only the result of a selfish necessity?

"You see, Miss," continued Jem; "it's all right with two people that's well off as long as both of 'em keep prosperous. Let one of 'em come down, and then it's all up. That's the way *they* part. Your rich folks won't have nothing to do with poor ones even when there's blood between 'em. Somehow, I shouldn't like to see you too high and mighty to say, 'Jem do this or that for me.' I took to all on you when I saw you first, so did Mister Chaundy. That's where it is, you see; we don't often meet pleasant company, and we don't like to part with it."

"I am sure you will never find us too high and mighty to acknowledge that we are pleased with your good opinion," I said.

"Jem talks very sensibly, and I am glad you have heard him," said Aunt Betsy. "Your grand-father thinks too well of the world, and Uncle Stephen won't allow there's any good in it. What you have just heard is common sense. I'm much obliged to you for what you have said, Jem."

"Then, Missis and Miss Marples," said Jem, who had risen to go, and now held the door in his hand, "the next time you ask me where I *live* I shall say in this here room and down yonder in Mister Chaundy's, and nowhere else. Is there anything I can do just now?"

As there was not, Jem departed. I remembered in his favor that though in the regular course of his vocation he received payment for the conveyance of our goods, he had steadily refused any remuneration for the services he rendered us in the house. Not liking his "common sense" so well as Aunt Betsy did, I needed this evidence of his good faith before placing implicit confidence in it. Instead of trusting the world too far, as Uncle Stephen had feared I should do,

I was inclined to look with suspicion on the little actual good that came in my way. The truth was so forbidding in comparison with the error in which I had dwelt so many years, that I had little inclination to believe anything.

I was glad to turn to my book and forget this too real world in the pages of "Don Quixote." I yielded all my sympathies to this old knight, who was compelled by a restless energy of character to go forth and do something, and by a natural abhorrence of wrong to proclaim himself the champion of the oppressed. Honoring his motives, I did not see all the absurdity of his exploits, and I got angry with those who turned him and them into ridicule. So absorbed was I that I could scarcely listen to my grand-father when he returned to tell us that the person to whom he applied had no work for him at present, but would remember him at some future time.

Bless God for that power of forgetting self in others! so long as it is present with us we have no need to complain of the burden of life.

On the following morning, greatly annoyed at being compelled to attend to my own affairs, I accompanied my grandfather and Jem, who led the way to Wimpole Street. As we went along my grand-father instructed me in what I should say; but, as I found afterwards, the main thing was overlooked by both of us.

Having arrived at the street, and found the number of the house, I left my two companions, and approached the door with some trepidation. My low, tremulous knock was answered by a shabby footman, who, when he understood my business, showed me into a back parlor while he went to announce my presence. He came back before I wished to see him, and asked me to walk up stairs. I followed him accordingly, and was ushered into a drawing-room in which two ladies were seated. My courage rose with the call upon it, and I curtsyed (an accomplishment, by the way, that Aunt Betsy had taught me) and walked forward, and looked these two, who might be the arbiters of my future destiny, in the face. The eldest lady was decidedly old. I only noted respecting her that her nose was rather disagreeably hooked and that she wore a wig and a turban. The younger

lady was stout and rather good-looking, but her voice was starlingly loud and coarse, and her manner dictatorial.

"I understand that you come about the governess's place," said the latter. "Sit down. I am very particular, as the register-office people may have told you. I have found that very young people do not sufficiently consider the interest of their employers, and you seem very young: what age are you?"

I told her, and the old lady shook her head.

"That is very young indeed," said the loud-voiced lady, whom I understood to be the mistress of the house, Mrs. Wilton. One can hardly imagine that you have completed your own education. What do you profess to teach?"

I underwent the disagreeable ordeal of enumerating my own accomplishments.

The old lady, who informed me that she was a Frenchwoman, then addressed me in her native language; and, after some conversation, professed herself to be well satisfied. Indeed, she paid me the compliment to say, that she had rarely met with an English person who could speak the language so well.

"That is satisfactory so far," said Mrs. Wilton. Now with regard to music, you will perhaps play a little."

She opened the folding doors that led to the back drawing-room, in which stood a piano. I had more confidence in my musical powers than in any other; I had a natural taste, if not talent, that way; and, thanks to Uncle Stephen, I had made some progress. I played until I was desired to stop.

"You play very creditably indeed," says Mrs. Wilton.—"How about drawing?"

At my grand-father's suggestion I had taken some of my drawings with me, and these I now exhibited; they seemed to give satisfaction.

"The great difficulty I have to contend with, said Mrs. Wilton, throwing herself upon a lounge, as if the very thought of it overcame her, "is the selfishness of those I have employed in this capacity. They all consider their own interest before mine, which creates a difficulty; and I do not know how to act. I have been compelled to adopt

the plan of receiving governesses a month on trial, with no salary during the month. Of course, if I engage you, it will be necessary to acquaint your parents with my invariable system."

If a passing thought suggested to me that this "invariable system" had something to do with Mrs. Wilton's frequent change of governesses, I did not allow it to daunt me. I said that my grand-father would attend upon her, if she wished.

"Your grand-father!" she repeated; are your parents dead?"

"My mother is dead," I replied.

"Your father is living, then. What is he?—what profession or trade, I mean; I am obliged to be particular about those I take into my house."

I had not been prepared for this question, and it upset me altogether. The truth was not to be told, and nothing in the shape of an equivoque occurred to me. Far stronger than any emotion of shame or distress was that of resentment against the man whom I was thus unexpectedly called upon to particularize and acknowledge. It seemed as if Providence, taking his part, permitted him, even unwittingly, to be the means of frustrating my effort for self-help My blood ran hot and cold during the full minute that I stood with downcast eyes, unable to frame a reply.

Doubtless the curiosity of the ladies had been aroused.

"What is your name?" inquired Mrs. Wilton.

"Margaret Marples."

"Your father's name is Marples?"

"No."

There was another pause, during which my interrogators might have exchanged significant glances.

"Were you brought up by your grand-father?"

"Yes."

"What is *his* calling?"

I had a keen consciousness that the truth would tell against me when I acknowledged that he had been a verger in——Cathedral, and that at present he was in London seeking work for himself.

"And he brought you up so expensively! Did you say he had been dismissed from the cathedral?"

I had not said so but I acknowledged this to be true.

"And how long have you been in London?"

"Only two days."

"This is extraordinary. Of course, you were aware that I should expect a most unexceptionable reference. You must be well known in——?"

Here was another question that seemed unanswerable. It was odd that my grand-father had not even considered the possibility of such inquiries. My embarrassment was becoming too painful to be borne, and I determined by a bold effort to free myself at any price.

"My grand-father," I said, "was peculiarly situated at ——. Though no one could say anything against his character, I know that he had few friends. Until I have spoken with him, I am not prepared to give a reference."'

Upon glancing at the two ladies, I found that I had produced a thoroughly unfavorable impression. Mrs. Wilton spoke immediately.

"Upon second thoughts, I consider you too young to undertake so serious a charge," she said: "I am sorry that you have had this trouble. Good morning."

She rang the bell as she spoke; and understanding that I was dismissed, I returned the salutation and walked down stairs, where the footman opened the street door for me. As Jem was still with us in the capacity of guide (for he had walked from the neighborhood of Clerkenwell,) I deferred what I chiefly had to say until we reached home, merely mentioning the objection to my youth. When we were alone, and I had given an account of all that passed, my grand-father was much distressed.

"I did think of all this," he said "but not until you had entered the house; I ought to have accompanied you."

"And to what purpose would you have accompanied her?" said Aunt Betsy. "You yourself have no reference to give. All your life you have allowed the sins of others to crush you down, and except amongst the very poor, whose good word would go for nothing, you have not a friend to help you in such a case as this. What I warned you of has come to pass, Thomas Marples."

"All along I have been in the Lord's hands," said my

grand-father. "My trust in Him is unshaken, and to-night we will consult with Mr. Chaundy."

Throughout the worst of my troubles, I possessed the power of looking forward, or dashing them aside in the present. I never sat down to lament over them. On the present occasion, I returned with avidity to "Don Quixote." In the evening, when Mr. Chaundy joined us, I divided my attention betwixt the conversation and this absorbing book.

My grand-father acquainted him with the great difficulty that stood in my way.

"I begin to feel that in worldly matters, I am only a blind leader of the blind," he continued. "I have left myself helpless, for I have no right to expect any man to credit my partial account of the past. Neither do I wish to drag the past back for any purpose, yet it seems necessary in self-defence. You, sir, who have yourself known trouble, may understand how a man can be crushed down without exactly deserving it. Circumstances compelled me to bring up this child in obscurity, so that she is less known in her native city than even here. Circumstances, too, over which I had no control, gave offence to the Dean and others, and led to my dismissial from a situation that I had held more than thirty years. My brother, the present mayor of ——, is wealthy: my poverty was a stumbling-block in his way, and he disowned me. I have not widened these breaches by showing resentment, and they are wide enough without that. If the Lord was not with us, our case would now be desperate."

"I can well believe," said Mr. Chaundy, "that you are more sinned against than sinning. But it is not well in this world to put up too tamely with what is unreasonable. A little pluck is necessary in these days, in which martyrdom may be perpetuated through a long life. We may go too far in not resisting evil."

"That is what I have said to my brother all along," said Aunt Betsy. "If *I* had been the man, we should not have been brought to this state."

"It is little that a man can do when his hands are tied, except trust in God," said my grand-father.

"The fact is," said Mr. Chaundy, lighting his pipe, and

puffing away vehemently, "the fact is, it is hard work steering a strait course through this world to the next. I find it a difficult matter myself. I do things that, upon mature deliberation, I cannot approve of,—what, under different circumatances, I would not do,—but I see no help. There is this advantage in a poor man steering wrong—the world will be sure to make such a noise about it that he may well afford to spare himself. I Look upon this as a providential kind of defence, without which there would be no getting on. If I thought so hardly of myself as Archdeacon Dixon showed me I had need to do the other day, I might go and hang myself at once. As to wealthy relations, they are the greatest clog that a man in difficulty has, besides being of no use. They envelope us in an atmosphere of dark and bitter thoughts so that we cannot breathe freely. Altogether, sir, you may depend upon it that poverty in these days is a very ugly affair."

"We are all willing to work," said my grand-father. "We only ask to be allowed to live by our own labor."

"That is all that thousands have asked who people our workhouses, and madhouses, and prisons," said Mr. Chaundy. "The many are ground down for the few, in spite of the Christianity, the philanthropy, and liberty of which England boasts. This I know to be the truth, because I have felt and seen it. Don't let me alarm you, however; and as to Miss Marples—refer to me;—Reverend Joseph Chaundy—that sounds well enough, if people are not too inquisitive, and you can address me at the Clerical Club. I can very conscientiously say all that any reasonable person would require."

We found reason, day by day, to think more highly of Mr. Chaundy. He entered warmly into our interests, advising and planning, and using his personal influence for my grand-father; attending to our daily convenience in conjunction with Jem; and in many ways doing his best to help and cheer us; so that we could not do otherwise than become attached to him. He continued to supply me with books, both French and English, and being himself a French scholar, we frequently conversed together in that language. The history of France had inspired me with a dislike of Frenchmen, which Mr. Chaundy first attempted to remove,

He had no strong prejudice in favor of my own contrymen to battle with; the few I had come in contact with had chiefly excited my abhorrence; and the cold, hard, unapproachable, hurrying crowd of that great city only reminded me of Uncle Stephen's words—that all men were self-seekers, all worshippers of the visible god—Gold.

Little, too, as I had yet been in the streets, I had been struck by the general want of courtesy. No respect was paid to age or sex by that pushing, driving, self-absorbed multitude; and when, on two or three occasions, my grandfather and I were nearly knocked down, and then rudely told to keep out of the way, I said to myself, this, on a larger scale, is only what we have met with before—'Go out of my way,—trouble me not,—hinder me not,—we have nothing in common, even as fellow worms,—let me pass on!' This was what the great crowd said to me, and what men who held their heads above the crowd had said before. The chill of desolation struck to my heart in the midst of that populous city, in whose power, and magnificence, and pleasure we had no share, and from whose philanthropy, blazoned on many a dead wall, we hoped nothing. There was not a single individual in that mass of human beings to whom we could turn and say—'Brother, we are in affliction, and need sympathy; we are wronged, and want help.' I had extravagant notions, doubtless, but the extravagance to me was the apparent utter dearth of the commonest sympathy that one might expect to find amongst a community of savages. All this reminded me of what Uncle Stephen had said—of what my grand-father had hoped in vain. No such vain seeker of the world's favor would I be: I was prepared to give indifference for indifference, contempt for contempt, hate for hate.

"You do the French injustice, so far as the working classes are concerned," said Mr. Chaundy to me one night. "The very audacity and fierceness of their occasional outbursts prove that there is noble stuff in them. The man of the blouse is never ashamed of his calling, which he knows to be honorable; he makes no struggle to rise above it, but takes his stand on the dignity of labor, boldly claiming for his class the high position which few dare outwardly dispute.

This intrepid self-respect lifts the French artizan altogether out of vulgarity and servility. He is the thing he seems, and he is proud of what he is, and if he struggles, it is for his order, not for his individual self. Then, in addition to this feeling of dignity and independence, the very lowest class in France is characterised by a strong love for literature and art. Most of the workmen are familiar with the noblest writers of their country,—with Moliere, Racine, Corneille; and the songs of Beranger fill the land. This is not the result of outward circumstances; not merely because the education of the people has made greater progress in France than elsewhere; that free lectures on the different sciences are open in every quarter of Paris; that schools for drawing, music, and singing, may be attended free of expense; but primarily, because of a natural thirst for knowledge, and love of the noble and the beautiful in the people themselves. And this elevation of sentiment makes the people courteous;—not pityfully servile as we are to the rich and powerful, but courteous alike to all,—the poorest as well as the highest. In these respects, and they are important, the French are our superiors. They look with contempt upon our mean adulation of money without generosity or wit, and power without greatness; and ridicule our insane, sordid, vulgar scramble after respectability. In France men unite for a common object, whose glory is reflected upon all alike; in England men think alike, it is true, each one for his individual self, and this is not union."

Everything I heard and saw convinced me that I had much to learn—or unlearn. At present all my energies were to be directed to the means of procuring food, clothing, and shelter—those smallest yet most important wants of an ever-craving life. Something beyond these I needed in order to live with satisfaction; I could not look forward with patience to a career of incessant abject drudgery; I was proud and disappointed, and thirsted for the power and the leisure to repel others and gratify myself; I had seen those I loved suffer wrong, and I burned to witness the humiliation of the oppressors. I had not yet begun to fear that I, who desired so much, should find it a hard matter to live from day to day. I was sufficiently easy in mind to note curiously many

things that came under my observation. Our landlady belonged to the sect called Ranters, and on certain days in the week she had gatherings at the house, during which discourses were delivered and hymns sung. I had been down to pay the rent one evening, when several persons were assembled in the front parlor. A dark-complexioned, stern-looking man followed me into the passage, and placing his hand upon my shoulder, asked in a solemn tone, "What was the state of my soul?"

"Do *you* care about my soul?" I asked, rather abruptly.

"Don't you think the Lord Jesus teaches me to care for all souls?" said the man. "Don't I yearn over you as a brand that may be snatched from the burning,—as a lost sheep that may be brought into the fold? Come to the meeting to-night, and let us rejoice over you as a dear sister."

Here was something like Christian communion. I thought I should like to go, merely to study these people more closely, but my grand-father had spoken against their errors, and I was not sure that I could obtain leave. I told the man I would consider about it, and he protested loudly against the danger of "considering" as I walked up-stairs. I repeated what I had heard, and, as I expected, my grand-father raised an objection.

"Let us cleave to our own church, and not be driven about by every wind of doctrine," he said. "If these people worship God in the spirit, so much the better for them; we can do the same without disgracing our own profession by departing from it."

"Yet these people preach Christ," I said. "It seems that our indifference and dislike to one another originates chiefly in this dividing of the church into sects."

"Didn't you find enough of indifference and dislike amongst Church people?" asked Aunt Betsy, sharply.

There was no denying this.

"For my part," she continued, "when I lived by myself I went mostly amongst the Methodists, and liked them, though there's worldliness enough about them, too. They have no proud bishops and deans, too grand to trouble themselves with poor people."

My grand-father entered upon a lengthened defence of the

church dignitaries, which was not concluded when Mr. Chaundy joined us. Aunt Betsy repeated to him my adventure in the passage, adding, "she says she should like to hear those people."

"You are inclined to be tolerant, I see," he said, turning towards me and smiling. "These men do an immense amount of good amongst the ignorant and the vicious, the thousands who never see the inside of a church, and who are only to be roused by the thundering declamation, the fierce threatenings, and rough though forcible appeals in which unlettered men excel. As to you, they might disgust you, especially if it happened to be what they call a 'love feast.' But the truth is, sir," he continued, turning to my grand-father, "our church would be none the worse if another John Wesley was raised up to rouse it from its spiritual apathy. We are too smooth and genteel to suit other than refined congregations, and a man's conscience may be French polished till no chance drop of grace can penetrate it. Truth is a rough customer after all, and it is quite as well not to have that to find out at last, as is too often the case."

"I think I shall go down and hear these people myself," said Aunt Betsy, pausing in her knitting work. Their voices uniting in a psalm tune came clearly up to us.

"I should like to go with you," I said.

"Let her go, said Mr. Chaundy," seeing my grand-father about to object. "She is old enough and has sense enough to detect anything she finds wrong, and she has her aunt with her."

"There ought not to be anything wrong when people are worshipping God," said my grand-father. "Well, go."

Just as we were my aunt and I went down. We paused in the passage until the singing was concluded, and then knocked at the door, which was quickly opened. Without any one speaking a word, places were found for us, and we sat down on different benches. The room was filled with men and women, young and old, and I fancied that many of the females, like our landlady, had a most forbidding aspect. The same man I had encountered in the passage was elevated upon a box at one end of the room, and held a

book in his hand, which he put down after we were seated, and commenced preaching. His vehement action and vociferous articulation startled me at first, and then offended me, especially as I watched the deepening color on his face, and saw a white foam gather about his mouth. If my conscience was not French polished, it was naturally too cold to agree with this red hot appeal to unconverted sinners. He certainly could not be accused of smoothness or gentility, as he gave utterance to a great deal of what sounded to me like gross abuse. Then there was no variety to atone for this, the discourse consisting chiefly of repetitions considered necessary for those who stood already on the brink of hell fire. If to me, however, these violent anathemas and exhortations appeared even impious, they evidently had a different effect upon those around me. The noise made by the preacher was heightened by exclamations on every side. Lost and altogether sunk in perdition, as they were represented to be, they seemed by their words and actions to be sensible of even greater unworthiness and peril. Beating their breasts, groaning, shouting, and, as in the case of the man who sat next me, scarcely seeming to know what they were about, the confusion became so oppressive, that I fairly wished myself out of it. The man I have alluded to as sitting next me, apparently in a paroxysm of overwrought feeling, had thrown his arm round my waist, and held me with so tight a grasp, that I could not extricate myself. His excitement seemed, so genuine, that on the score of his evidently not knowing what he was about, I was inclined to excuse the liberty, until I found that on becoming calmer he discovered no intention to release me, though he somewhat relaxed his grasp. When I put my hand to his, for the purpose of pushing it away, he gave my fingers a powerful squeeze, detaining them several minutes. In my distress I looked towards Aunt Betsy, who sat rigidly erect with her eyes fixed upon the preacher. If this was merely a demonstration of Christian love, which it might be, I could not help acknowledging a preference for the indifference to which I had been more accustomed. I did not, however, incline to such a belief, and viewing the man's conduct in the light of an im-

pertinence, I desired him, in a low tone, to take his arm away.

"Oh, the love of them as knows they're all one in Christ!" exclaimed the man, giving me an additional squeeze. "Is there any on us as doesn't love one another?—is any on us in this room wicked to that ere degree?"

He spoke in a loud tone, as if he meant to be heard. Indeed the chief feature of the meeting was this privilege to speak, singly or altogether, as it happened; the preacher frequently enlarging on what was said, as he did now, until the demonstrations of Christian affection became quite alarming. In the midst of my own trouble, heightened by an attempt to kiss me, which I frustrated by forcibly dashing my hand in my neighbor's face, I observed Aunt Betsy engaged in a brief struggle with a small, wizened, elderly man, who, on attempting to pay her a like compliment, found himself suddenly lifted from the ground, and dashed backward, to the great discomposure of the more peaceably inclined. In the midst of the confusion that ensued, my aunt strode forward, and seized my arm.

"I think you ought to be ashamed," she said, "calling yourself Christians, and suffering such doings before young people! Let us pass out."

There seemed to be an attempt to stop us.

"What is our dear sister offended at?" exclaimed the preacher; "or is she *not* a dear sister? Is there no Christian love in her?"

"No, there isn't," said Aunt Betsy, sharply, "nor in you either, nor in any of you. I consider these doings quite scandalous, and I am sorry I brought my niece here."

"I hope you don't mean to say anything scandalous about my house," said Mrs. Dent, our landlady, here showing her sour visage. "I've kept house here thirty years, and never had anything against my character."

"It would speak better for your character if you would show a little more civility from day to day instead of bursting upon us all at once in this boisterous manner," said Aunt Betsy. "You stand out of the way there, and let us go out!"

The preacher again raised his voice, but we managed to

get away and left him speaking. My aunt took no pains to conceal her indignation as she entered our room adjusting her cap. As for me, I dare say my face was all in a flame, and my angry excitement had taken away my breath.

"The meeting has been a failure, I see," said Mr. Chaundy, smiling.

"I am sure I never saw anything so shameful in my life," said Aunt Betsy, indignantly. "There was the whole set of them suddenly falling to kissing and embracing one another —and this child amongst them! I saw some fellow kissing you, Margaret."

The shame, and indignation, and annoyance, united with this exposure, was more than I could bear, and I burst into tears.

"Come to me, my poor child!" said my grand-father; "I said you ought not to go."

I leaned my head, sobbing, on my grand-father's shoulder; and then it suddenly occured to me that I was making myself ridiculous, and I looked up and dashed away my tears.

"I am sure you did not see any one kiss me, Aunt Betsy," I said. "I struck the man who sat next me in the face just as you knocked down the little old man who made a like attempt with yourself; and I am afraid I hurt him, for when we came out he was holding his hand before his eyes."

Mr. Chaundy laughed long and loudly. "We talk a deal about Christian love and fellowship," he said, "without seeming able to come to a right understanding about it. At one time our tender concern for men's soulds led us to torture and burn their bodies, and I don't know if that was not better than what you have seen to-night. We that are old have an uncomfortable consciousness that the young are doomed to disappointment. We have been disappointed ourselves, and a long life shows us no remedy for life's evils."

My grand-father denied this position, and declared God's grace to be sufficient for a probationary existence. As I watched Mr. Chaundy, puffing away at his pipe without answering, I was impressed, as I had been before, with the belief that he, Churchman as he was, had not found a refuge from dissatisfaction in this doctrine.

"Jem," said my grand-father, addressing that personage

on the previous Saturday, "what church does Mr. Chaundy attend?"

"Lor', bless you!" said Jem, "ne never attends no church when he hasn't got to preach; what should he for, when he be chock full o' sermons hisself? He don't go to church in a ordinary way, nor me neither."

"Does he not tell you that you ought to go?"

"Lor', no! Mister Chaundy sometimes preaches in these here churches when the curates wants a holiday, and then I goes, in course; but in a general way he says to me, 'Jem,' says he, 'you do as you like about it: for I'm not quite sure that going to church won't spile you!"

This, and similar testimony, made my grand-father distrustful of Mr. Chaundy, who was, nevertheless, the only friend we had, and a good friend too—better than any we had found amongst the high churchman at ——; better than any we were likely to find amongst the "Ranters." He reminded me of Uncle Stephen, who helped us quietly and unobtrusively, and without parading his own generosity, or the godliness which, if it becomes disgusting to us, must be unendurable to the Searcher of all hearts. For my part, I was thankful that we had met with a man who seemed better inclined to act well than to sermonise or dictate.

We had now been a fortnight in London and found nothing to do. I understood, rather from my grand-father's looks than from anything he said, that our small means were dwindling away in the meantime. The register-office people had not as yet heard of anything that would suit me, and my grand-father's application to the law-stationers and attorneys had produced nothing. Aunt Betsy seemed very equable under all this until one day, when my grand-father was out, she thus addressed me.

"It's of no use going on in this way, Margaret, because it can't last, and we mustn't expect to live in idleness. If I could have got sewing work you might have helped me rather than do nothing, but I have tried hard and I can't. You heard what Mr. Chaundy said the other night about the French considering all labor honorable:—that's just what I think myself. Let me live by the work of my hands without being a burden upon anybody and I shall be satis-

fied. I shall go out to wash, or do any other hard work that I can get. Don't mention it till I have tried; but this is what I mean to do, and thank God that I have health and strength for it."

Aunt Betsy's resolution showed me at once all the peril of our situation. The great agony to me was the knowledge that I had been the main cause of this distress. My proud, indignant feelings, and the great things I wanted to do, crumbled to nothing. I was brought down to a craving and praying for work,—any sort of drudgery by which I might avert the utter destitution that lay before us. And Aunt Betsy, strong in her principles and resolute about putting them into practice, was the first amongst us to obtain employment. A few nights after the above conversation she again spoke out as we were retiring to rest.

"I have got a place. Margaret," she said: "that is, I have got work as a chairwoman. To-morrow morning I shall be up and awake before daylight. That queer creature, Jem, recommended me: so you see how little patronage is needed to enable one to live."

Though I had expected this, my very soul quivered at the reality. My heart struggled with a mighty pang.

"O God!" I said, "my dear, poor aunt, if I could only save you from this!"

"From what, you silly child?" said Aunt Betsy. "What have I done but work all my life? And it does me good; if you want to kill me keep me idle. Just listen to me, your grand-father knows all about it, for I told him to-day. Thank God, you know all sorts of housework, so he won't be lost; and whatever you do keep your spirits up—don't let him see that you are cast down—don't *be* cast down; recollect that you are young and strong, and that he is old and infirm. And now be a good child and go to sleep."

For the first time that I could remember Aunt Betsy kissed me, and I soon understood from her regular breathing that she slept. I could not help marvelling and reproaching myself more than ever for having often thought unkindly of her. Her character shone out in adversity: she uttered no reproaches, as she well might have done: and her affection: for myself was most exhibited when I stood in most need of

it. Her mind was better regulated than mine, if less polished: I envied the calm slumber into which she had fallen, whilst I lay tossed on a sea of troubled thoughts, unable for hours to still the uselessly busy heart and brain, until towards morning, I fell into a heavy sleep, from which I was awakened by Aunt Betsy getting up in the dark.

"Are you awake?" she said, hearing me stir.

"Yes, aunt."

"Try to sleep again. I shall be back at eight or nine o'clock to-night, perhaps sooner. Come, this is a good beginning; one of us has got work. By-and-by we shall all do better."

She kissed me again before leaving the room. A few real, hot, heart-wrung tears gushed from my eyes as I heard her descending the stairs. Listening intently I soon understood that she could not open the street-door. Then I heard her tapping at the door of the back parlor, in which our landlady and her daughter slept; and then again there was a small war of words, and I distinctly heard Mrs. Dent say—"What makes you want to go out at this time of the morning, Mrs. Marples?" I did not catch the reply though I had advanced to the top landing in my night-dress; the outer door was opened and slammed to again with a great noise.

I crept back into the room, but not to bed. I struck a light and dressed myself, and set about such work as I could find; for I had a deal of Aunt Betsy's restiveness under inactivity, and I found bitter thoughts a bad accompaniment to idleness. My dislike to our landlady had, since the night we attended the meeting, been mixed with some fear of her. Her always peevish and unfriendly look had since then portended something worse than usual, and with all her pretended sanctity she seemed the very sort of person likely to harbor malice. Her cold, formal, repulsive manner, though disagreeable enough, mattered little so long as we could pay the rent of her rooms; but I shivered from head to foot, like a leaf, at the thought of owing her anything. Then, I knew enough of the world to be assured that when she came to understand what took my aunt out so early, she would take advantage of the knowledge and our evident poverty. An intuitive sense of the nobleness of Mr. Chaundy's nature

forbade any such apprehension in his case, but the false shame, from which none are free, made me look for our next interview with anxiety—and an internal shrinking from I knew not what; for I had sense enough to know that Aunt Betsy had done rightly and nobly,—sense enough to feel proud of her, and to love her better than I had ever done before. And this was with me no mere sentimentalising about what I conceived to be just; for I had already resolved to join Aunt Betsy in her labor if no better might be. I had the sort of pride that would not endure others drudging for me as I would not drudge for them or myself; and at heart the shackles of this world's opinion hung loosely about me; I could shake them at will—by a strong effort I knew that I could cast them from me altogether.

As if he had divined all I thought and felt, Mr. Chaundy greeted us at night with more than his usual cordiality. He made no secret of missing Aunt Betsy, but spake at once of her absence, and the occasion of it; and, seeming to understand that our necessities were more urgent than he had supposed, he entered into the subject, and wandered to no other.

"It is a beautiful thing," he said, drawing his chair to the fire and taking out his pipe, "to consider how bold and earnest a spirit God has given us wherewith to battle with the difficulties of life. The very belief in this spirit is worth half the homilies that were ever preached. Never mind that vulgarity frequently starts out of its path in needless fear of contamination; that indolence at all times shudders to contemplate it; for the reward of resolution is two-fold, enabling us to laugh at the squeamishness at the same time that we escape the worst tyranny of the world. No one has started at shadows more than I have done through life, and it is often the fate of such as me to be curst with a lively sense of their own folly. We addict ourselves to one pursuit; we prepare ourselves for it, and, not meeting with the success we anticipated, we give up the game of life like poltroons. We become cowardly for others as well as for ourselves; we are diseased, and we shrink from the efforts of a vigorous spirit as a consumptive patient shrinks from the blast of winter. There is a look of determination about

now, Miss Marples, that struck me at first as like something in your aunt's countenance and manner, though there all resemblance ends. Like her, I dare say you would not mind making a beginning at anything that might at least be made useful as a stepping-stone. In short, I know of a place that, though it would not suit any one very particular, might be made something of in your hands."

I expressed my eager wish to take a situation of any description.

"I will tell you all the truth about it," said Mr. Chaundy. "Whilst preaching several times at a neighboring church, I received occasional invitations to dine with the family of a tradesman. I have seen a good deal of them at different times, and have not been impressed in their favor. The tradesman himself is a grocer, in a large way, and what is called a thorough man of the world. His wife is an uneducated woman, who might be respectable, but who makes herself vulgar and disagreeable by aping the fine lady, and striving after gentility as the one great good of existence. The children, and there is a swarm of them, are what might be expected from such a bringing up,—self-confident, rude, and ignorant. Some of them have finished their education; and for the rest, Mrs. Brown thinks it would be cheaper, as well as more genteel, to employ a governess at home. I, who am looked upon in the light of a respectable acquaintance, have been consulted on this matter. Now it went against my conscience to recommend you to this place, but if you have courage to try your best, I dare say I could procure it for you. At all events, my recommendation would in that quarter be sufficient."

He had said nothing to daunt me, and I was sufficiently conscious that I could not afford to be too particular. I expressed my willingness to go, and thanked him.

"There are a few difficulties in the way that we may be able to stare down," he continued. "Mrs. Brown has no respect for talent, seeing that it may hired and cheapened, and kept in a subordidate state. If we could manage by any means to bring in the fact that your great-uncle is mayor of ———, it would benefit you very materially."

My grand-father shook his head, and I protesetd against

such a posibility eagerly. "I know nothing of him," I said; "I never even saw him; it is quite impossible."

"Well, under all the circumstances of the case, it wouldn't do. She would boast of his acquaintance, ask an introduction to him, and want to know how often you corresponded. This is one side of the question; now for the other: it is not adviseable she should understand that your circumstances are particularly depressed, or that it should come to her knowledge that your aunt is compelled to labor in a menial capacity. Without knowing this, she would be sufficiently inclined to keep you down; knowing it, she would be insolent."

"Christ did not teach that poverty was a crime," said my grand-father.

"My dear sir, his teaching avails us little with the world. Poverty is popularly considered to be a crime; it is legally punishable in many ways. But crime is not the proper word; the general idea about poverty is, that it is some loathsome and disfiguring kind of leprosy, that it would be an abomination to touch. For this reason we lodge our robbers and murderers better than we do our paupers, and our sympathies are more readily aroused for the former than the latter. The fact is, deny it as we will, money-worship has become the popular creed in England."

This belief, in a minister of the church, agreed with all that Uncle Stephen had said. I longed to talk to him about that kind friend whom I felt we had used ill. I received readily these doctrines that led my heart farther from God.

"I should not like my child to enter a family so little under the influence of Christian principles as the one you describe," said my grand-father. "She has been brought up piously, and I would have good example kept before her eyes."

"That feeling is perfectly right and natural," said Mr. Chaundy; "but searching for a correct Christian family would be like looking for a needle in a bundle of hay. We must take people as we find them; if we are properly taught, their very errors will give us light."

I was eager to enter upon this situation, and my grand-father at length consented that I should try it. There was

no need of Mrs. Brown knowing anything about Aunt Betsy, who, in the event of my grand-father and myself obtaining employment, might remain at home. This, then, was decided upon, and Mr. Chaundy promised to speak to the Browns the following day.

Aunt Betsy came home tired, but in good spirits. She had earned her food and eighteen pence; and if she had found anything to complain of, she did not mention it. She heard of my prospects with pleasure, and perfectly acquiesced in the propriety of keeping herself in the back-ground. Understanding the world far better than my grand-father did, there was no surprising her; and she submitted to whatever was disagreeable or revolting as a matter of course.

With feelings altogether embittered and faith-shaken, I prepared myself to go out into the world. I shrank a little from the inevitable that lay before me. I hated hypocrisy; I was inclined to be fair and open; and where I was going, I could only expect to hate and be hated, and to parry the injustice of others as well as I could. I was determined to do my duty; I might thus satisfy selfishness, and, at all events, I should feel that I was not a real burden upon any one.

Aunt Betsy left us at the same hour on the following morning. I had occasion to go out in the course of the day, and upon returning I encountered, in the passage, the man who had so annoyed me on the night of the meeting. He was a mean-looking individual, about thirty years of age; his pale, lank hair had a faded look, and was matched by bristly white eyelashes, and his glassy blue eyes and large teeth projected. Altogether he had a most repulsive look, because the general expression of his face indicated low cunning, and much ready, if well-concealed, ferocity. I shivered from head to foot when he seized my arm and held me so fast that I could not get away.

"Come, now," he said, in a hideous whisper, "don't be so shy; what's the need on it? Lor', what nice eyes yourn is! I say! I didn't come arter the preaching that ere night; I come arter the gals, as allays likes to be hugged; and since I seen you I ain't thought o' none on 'em. I came a purpose to see you, so do be kind to a poor feller as has got his

'art damaged, and no mistake. Hush! don't be arter screechiing in that how."

Finding that to struggle was of no use, I called aloud upon our landlady, who made her appearance from the parlor. The man immediately released me, and sauntered away as if nothing was the matter.

"Well, what's to do now, Miss Marples?" said Mrs. Dent, looking particularly grim and sour.

"I have been insulted by the man who has just gone away, and I wished you to speak to him."

"Insulted!" repeated Mrs. Dent, in a taunting tone; "I don't see why you should be so high and mighty, that you'r not to be spoken to! That's a very respectable young man; and as to anything he could say to you, you needn't frighten yourself, for he's as good as engaged to my daughter. And if we're not good enough for you, Miss Marples, you're not good enough for us, and that's the long and the short of it. I've always kept my house respectable; we're not used to lodge charwomen and such like; so, if you'll be good enough to let your grand-father know that the rooms is wanted, I shall take it as a favior."

The mingled insolence and freezing civility of this speech told well upon me. Here was a sample of what I was to expect from the world. My grand-father was out: he had gone by appointment to the house of the law-stationer, to whom he had been recommended by Mr. Chaundy, and I expected that he would bring back work. This hope, and the forlorn one that lay before myself, had slightly exhilirated my spirits, and I was ashamed at feeling how easy it was to cast me down again. Casting down it was not exactly, for I had no height to fall from; it was a sudden freezing of the blood that had just begun to flow a little more freely. Indeed, with respect to that freezing of the blood, which soon gave me a general statue-like sensation, I was rather indebted to it than otherwise, even at that early stage of my experience, as the numbness seized me altogether, and deadened the sense of feeling. It was the result of a scorn that was mightier than anger,—a pride that triumphed over grief.

As yet I was only a beginner; and I certainly felt more

on that occasion than I did afterwards under far more trying circumstances. I was sorry to be compelled to repeat to Aunt Betsy and my grand-father the substance of what I had heard, and I was not sure that we had the means left for paying our rent and going away.

My grand-father returned in good spirits, for he had obtained employment. I told him at once the bare fact that we must quit the rooms, as our landlady said she wanted them.

"How very strange!" said my grand-father. "We have paid the rent; did she mention any objection to us as lodgers?"

I had dreaded this question, and I answered it.

"Very well," said my grand-father, quietly, "perhaps we shall be more comfortable elsewhere. Don't be troubled about this, child; we have done nothing wrong, and whilst our means last we can be independent."

I felt somewhat reassured. On the whole, I was inclined to be thankful that I should not have to leave my relations in the hands of Mrs. Dent. They would not remove to any great distance, and Mr. Chaundy could still visit them. When that gentleman came in rather late to tell us that he had spoken to the Browns, and that he had promised I should call upon them the next morning, my grand-father informed him that we had received notice to quit the house.

"Why?" inquired Mr. Chaundy; "what does the woman mean—what did she say?"

"I don't mind you knowing, Mr. Chaundy," said Aunt Betsy, who had returned home. "She objects to me because I employ myself at such work as I can get. I am not respectable enough for her."

Mr. Chaundy had not sat down, saying he had no time to stop; perhaps he feared interrupting my grand-father who had been writing all the evening. Now, however, he sat down and commenced smoking.

"This curse pursues one from the lowest class to the highest," he said,—"this eternal craving for gentility. None inquire after worth, and the consequence is, that few care about it. This woman began life as a servant. Her husband was, in his lifetime, a porter in the city: now she gets her livelihood by letting lodgings, and she and her

daughter clean feathers and furs for the shops. Yet for all this, and notwithstanding her pretentions to piety, you see she cannot tolerate anything that is not respectable. How can a poor ignorant woman who has seen nothing better all her life, help it? We have our respectable churches to which poverty and shabbiness are not admitted; these are filled by fashionable congregations who have a fashionable preacher, a man of family, to match. As to our city churches, I once heard an alderman's wife observe that she considered the irreligion of the very poor a great blessing, quite a providential circumstance, as their presence in the church in large numbers would not only be unwholesome but so very disreputable. The feeling, my friends, is universal, at least in this 'nation of shopkeepers,' and there is nothing for it but to submit with a good grace."

"In France it is not so," I said, unconscious that I was thinking aloud.

"Nor anywhere else," said Mr. Chaundy, "except it be in America. That 'finest nation on the face of the earth' apes us too closely to admit of its setting a noble example in this matter. Yet the Americans may laugh at our toleration of negroes,—we that will not tolerate our own poor."

"Some day I shall go to France," I said. This wish or determination had occupied my mind for some time. As one of the people, I longed to find myself in a land where I could lift up my head for what I was: it was loathsome to think of the pretence ready on every side to crush me down for the accidental disadvantages of birth and position.

"You must not forget, Margaret," said my grand-father, "that France is chiefly peopled by papists and infidels. Do not indulge in dreams of finding substantial good in such a place."

I was on the point of saying,—"I dont care what they are so they be unlike the people around me here," but I checked myself and remained silent. I felt, however, that I could no longer be taught by my grand-father; the world had taken that power of God out of his hands.

CHAPTER VI.

On the following morning Aunt Betsy remained at home, and at ten o'clock I was prepared to call on Mrs. Brown. Jem walked with me to show the way. It was a very crowded, bustling neighborhood, and the crowd, as usual, elbowed its way after an independent fashion, that rendered it necessary for every individual to look after him or herself. This unceremonious jostling in the streets, where a lord would stand as little chance as any one else, seems a contradiction to the state of the case upon closer inspection. This show of rude liberty which allows the ignorant, the arrogant, and the vicious, a wide license, and which wants the restraint of nationaly good manners, is not at all incompatible with the real slavery that fetters society at the heart's core. As we passed along, two scavengers were filling a cart with street refuse. One of them (I thought intentionally, and I narrowly escaped with a small sprinkling of mud myself) contrived to bespatter a very dandified young man who was picking his way with a spruce cane in his hand. A roar of laughter, in which Jem joined, saluted this personage as he turned round with an inflamed face to demand an explanation.

"It was a haccident," said the scavenger; "yer should keep out o' the way."

I passed on and left them disputing. This seemed to me very like an ebullition of poverty's dislike to its natural enemy—gentility. I only pretend to speak of English manners and habits as a stranger and a sojourner in the country for a short period,—to give faithfully the results of my own experience. It may not be altogether true that the streets of London are unfit for a decent female to pass through, but that was my impression to the last. I felt

thankful on this occasion when Jem at length informed me that we stood before Mr. Brown's shop.

It was a large, warehouse-like place with four stories rising above the lower basement. Jem led me down a passage, where he pointed out the private door, and saying he would wait my return, left me. My knock was answered by a boy in an apron, who led me to the foot of a large stair-case, and pulled a bell-rope, that sent a clanging peal through the house. A maid-servant presently made her appearance, and learning my name, she desired me to follow her up-stairs. She introduced me to a large sitting-room looking backwark, where I found Mrs. Brown.

Mrs. Brown was tall and stout, with a large florid face, enlivened by very light hair. Like Mrs. Wilton, her voice was masculine, but that I attributed to a habit in both of speaking louder and more confidently than seemed necessary for ordinary purposes and from hour to hour.

"So you're the young—person a Mr. Chaundy recommended for the governess sitiation. Set you down. Mr. Chaundy is a friend of ourn, as I suppose you know," and I thought she tossed her head a little. "He tells me as you're a horphen, and that suits me very well, as raly we've such a large family and such a circle of acquaintance as we can't well do with no more people about the house. I understand as you can teach music and French?"

I replied that I believed I could.

"Raal good French now is it? I think I could tell;—will you talk a bit?"

I repeated a rather long passage from a work of Chateaubriand's, which Uncle Stephen had given me, and which I liked very much.

"Well, that sounds nice, and like real French," said Mrs. Brown. "I'm not quite ignorant of them matters you see. My daughter's larned French at a boarding-school, and you can touch her up a bit. I want all my children to larn French and music. Now, what do *you* want?"

This was addressed to five young urchins, girls and boys, who first peeped in at the door, and then entered the room in a scamper.

"Don't come here, scowdging in that way!" said Mrs.

Brown. "Where's your manners? Louisa Caroline, take your fingers out of your mouth. Hubert Adolphus, if you sit stroddling in that chair I'll call your par up. Now, one on you go and call Miss Brown here."

"I sha'nt," said Hubert Adolphus, who retained his position on the chair.

"Nor me neither," said a girl of about seven; "she's a nasty thing—she's been slapping me."

"And served you right, I dare say," said Mrs. Brown. "Leonora you will go for mar,—she's mar's pet."

"Nay," says Leonora, shaking herself, and looking askance at me.

"Well, I never!" ejaculated Mrs. Brown. "They're such hindependent children as never was seen. But I'll tell your par of you."

She advanced to the door herself, and called out the name "Matilda Jane," and presently a young lady some years older than myself, very thin and sickly looking, with a large nose and dark hair plaited very elaborately, made her appearance.

"Law, mar," she said, "what do you want now?"

"This is the governess as I'm going to hire," said Mrs. Brown, "and I want you to talk French with her. Mr. Chaundy says she talks it very well."

The young lady eyed me from head to foot in a very contemptuous manner. I addressed her in a short sentence of French.

"That's not the way I've been used to speak it," she said, "and I could talk very well at Miss Bennet's. I'm not going to begin again, and that's the long and short of it, Ma."

"I expects you'll do as you're bid," said Mrs. Brown, showing more spirit with this young lady than she had done with the younger children. "Now, go your ways, and mind what I say to you." The young lady departed with a very defiant air.

"Now, Miss—I forget your name—oh, yes! Marples; you understand," said Mrs. Brown, smoothing down an extraordinary morning dress—a faded and rather greasy red silk one—"as I want my children to larn music and

French; I likes to hire people by the month, and then if they don't suit, we can make short work of it. You'll have board and lodging and twelve pound a year if you like to take it. Washing won't cost you much if you wear dark dresses. What do you say?"

Wishing, above all things, to cease being a burden on my grand-father, I considered this offer rather magnificent. I had a good stock of clothes to begin with, and, as Mrs. Brown said, washing would not cost me much; I closed with her offer at once.

"I believe," I said, "Mr. Chaundy informed you that I had a grand-father, whom I should sometimes like to see."

"Oh, yes; he did say you'd a grand-father. Well, in course you can go to see him—suiting my convenience."

With this understanding I promised to come for good on the following day. My grand-father and Aunt Betsy considered this very well for a beginning, but Mr. Chaundy was highly indignant at the terms.

"This woman is putting upon you shamefully," he said, "but I see no help for it just now. Well, we will try to look out for something better."

Aunt Betsy insisted on doing my washing. Jem could take my clothes to and fro, and this was decided upon. On the following morning I took leave of my grand-father, Aunt Betsy, and Mr. Chaundy, the former shedding tears; and followed by Jem, who carried my box upon his truck, I set out for Mrs. Brown's.

I was introduced to a large, naked-looking room on the second floor, which the children usually occupied. On a small cushioned arm-chair, placed near the fire-place, sat a deformed girl who looked much older than her actual age—fourteen. She was the sole occupant of the room when I entered it with Mrs. Brown.

"The children's got a holiday to-day," said that lady; "you know its Christmas time, and they looks for it. They're gone to Grinnidge with a party, and won't be home till night. You can keep Meely company; and I dare say you can sew well. I've some things as want furbishing up, and I dares say you'll make something of 'em."

I expressed my willingness to try, and Mrs. Brown

brought me a silk dress to pick to pieces and turn. She then left the room, and I sat, down to my work.

The deformed girl, who had not spoken a word, continued looking at me with her hollow eyes. Her features were unnaturally sharpened, but I saw her resemblance to the rest of the children. All had the large nose, and sallow complexion, and dark hair of Mr. Brown.

"Is your name Amelia?" I asked, "wishing to draw her into conversation."

"Amelia Nanetta Charlotte," she replied. "Isn't it a fine name for such as me?"

"Names do not signify much," I said, "and I do not see why you should not have a fine name as well as any one else."

"That's all gammon," said Amelia. "I'm not to be gammoned."

"What?"

"Don't you know what gammon is? Law, don't tell me!"

I positively heard the word for the first time, but I had a dim perception of its meaning.

"I speak in all sincerity," I said. "You must be lonely up here. Do you ever go out?"

"No, nobody offers to take me, and I wouldn't go if they did. They're always telling me I'm ugly and a fright; they're ashamed of me and I'm ashamed of myself. What should I go out for?"

This was one of the afflictions of earth of which I had never dreamed. No love in the very heart of home—no hope beyond it—no satisfaction in self.

"Do you like reading?"

"No, I don't. I like to sit quiet by myself, and hate everybody."

"But that is sinful."

"How do you know what's sinful? Isn't it sinful for them to go to church and come back to make game of me? They bring me tracts, too, and I burn 'em."

I did not know how to deal with this singular creature, humpbacked and ricketty, with a small, swollen, helpless body, and malice gleaming out of her bright black eyes.

"You think yourself handsome, I suppose?" she said, after a pause.

"Do you think so?"

"Oh, you fancy yourself sharp! Now you've gone and tore mar's gownd, and she'll make a piece of work."

I *had* unluckily torn the gown, which was rotten. What sharp eyes the creature had!

"You think you're come here to be comfortable, don't you? Ho! ho! ho!" she said, shortly.

"Why should I not be comfortable?"

"Are you used to be snubbed? I'll tell you what—our children are little devils: don't I hate the sight of 'em! Mar cares for nothing but herself. You should hear our housemaid stuff her up about looking young. She and Matilda Jane are always quarreling. I know why: mother's jealous of her. Then there's Francis James—have you seen *him*?"

"One of the little boys?"

"Law, I wish he could hear you! Francis James is the biggest man in London, according to his thinking. Mar likes him for all that, because she thinks him stylish, and he tells her he gets into fashionable company. Par quarrels with him because he won't work, and he quarrels with par because he can't get enough money to spend. Mar helps him to rob the till, and some of these days they'll be saying Tony did it; and I wish they would. I hate Tony."

"Hush, for heaven's sake!" I said.

"Oh, you're frightened, are you? I thought I could frighten you. There's uglier things than me in this house."

It is needless to pursue the conversation held through the long day with this being, singularly deformed in mind as well as body. Shrewd and observing, and evidently at war with everybody, it was quite horrifying to listen to her anecdotes of the meanness, the hypocrisy, and the depravity altogether of her family and their acquaintances; and ill as I was myself inclined to think of the human nature about me, I found myself instinctively taking up the gauntlet in its defence.

In my grand-father's home we had always been accustomed to celebrate Christmas as a holy time; and I was familiar

with the festivities peculiar to the season in old days; but the reality of merry-making, as I witnessed it in Mrs. Brown's house, was something quite new to me. As Twelfth Night occured a few days after my installment there, and as Mrs. Brown had issued invitations for a juvenile ball, my setting about teaching the children was at present out of the question. Indeed Miss Brown, indifferent about my presence when she said it, expressed her wonder at mar boring them with a governess in the midst of the holidays. But Mrs. Brown knew what she was about; and finding, as she expected, that I could sew well, and that I had some taste in fashioning dress, found me full employment from morning until late at night. When I had finished turning her dress, which she said was good enough for a juvenile party, I had to hurry through some alterations in the children's frocks. In the course of three days I began to wonder how I should ever obtain sufficient authority over my unruly pupils to do any good with them. They so evidently considered me in the light of an inferior, and took so many liberties with me already, snatching my work out of my hands, suddenly jerking my chair away when I attempted to sit down, throwing tea in my face during that meal, and so on, that I might well despair. My annoyance and ineffectual remonstrances afforded huge delight to Miss Amelia, who declared that having a governess in the house would be good fun all the year round.

On the morning of Twelfth-day, as I acknowledged I understood ironing pretty well, Mrs. Brown said she should take it as a "favor" if I would release Mary from that work, there being plenty else for her to do. So I descended to a back parlor, dark, from its situation, at all times, and now lighted by gas. I had to pass to and fro, to fetch my irons from the fire in the kitchen, where three servants and a charwoman were busily engaged. Through the open door of the room I was in I heard everything that passed, and I could not but marvel at the volubility of these woman, who kept up an incessant conversation, literally, as it seemed to me, about nothing. Presently I heard a shrill scream, and Mary, the nursemaid, cried out:

"Now you leave me alone, Tony; you'd best, or I'll call missis."

"What a fuss the gals make, and where's the use on it?" said a voice I recognized instantly as that of my tormentor at the meeting. "Don't I know as all the gals likes to be kissed?"

"Not by such a fool as you," said Mary; "so keep your hands to yerself."

"I say, Sally," said Tony, "nice gal that new governess, ain't she?"

I heard the word "hush!" and then a smothered conversation was carried on. This discovery, that I was in the same house with so hideous a hypocrite, distressed me exceedingly, especially when I reflected that he might do me great disservice by telling more about my family than I wished the Browns to know. I did not anticipate anything worse, or that I should have any difficulty about keeping him at a distance.

I was absorbed by these unpleasant thoughts, when suddenly I felt two huge hands placed at either side of my face, which was wrenched round and brought into close contact with that of Tony himself, looking more hideous than ever, as there was a malicious grin on his countenance. In the horror and exasperation of the moment I struck him over the mouth with the hot iron.

"Damn your imperance!" he exclaimed, retreating at once, and putting his hand to his mouth. "This is twice you've served me that how. Who the devil are you as you mayn't be touched, I should like for to know? Who was turned out of their lodgings 'cause they was a disgrace to the house? Mind if I don't serve you out."

"Do what you like," I said, breathless with irritation, "but take yourself out of this room at once, and do not repeat your liberties with me. Are you going, or must I go?"

"Law, what a spitfire you are!" said the man, but retreating backwards as he spoke. "See if I don't get you under the misletoe to-night."

He disappeared, and I continued my work with trembling hands. At the very outset it seemed probable that I

should either be turned out of the place or be compelled to leave it on my own account. I had not calculated all the miseries of dependence, or dreamed of encountering that of which I should be ashamed to speak.

I was kept busily employed all day, and when the company began to arrive I attended in an ante-room, furnished plentifully with looking-glasses, to assist. There might have been fifty young people in all, and it was rather pleasant work to take off the outer garments of the little girls and boys, and touch up their shining hair, and watch the glee dancing in their bright eyes. I was lingering over one very pretty little girl, whose fair curls swept over her shoulders, when Miss Brown called out to me:

"Get rid of them little bothers as sharp as you can, I want you to help us."

There was a crowd of girls about my own age, and some older. When the "little bothers" were fairly turned out of the room, my services were more than ever in request, as the young ladies had brought their dresses in band-boxes. I had never before associated with young people—if it could be called associating, where none spoke to me except to ask my assistance—and all this flutter of preparation, and evident anxiety about effect, bewildered and surprised me more than anything that had come under my observation before. My previous sedentary life and inexperience must be taken into consideration when I say, that these young girls frequently made me blush, indeed, kept my face altogether in a glow, with what seemed to me very extraordinary boldness.

"I don't know whether to wear these white roses in my hair, or have it plain," said the girl whose dress I was fastening. "Which would you do?"

"Oh, wear the roses; they're so nice in your dark hair," said the girl she addressed. I've got a red geranium."

"Is there anybody worth dressing up for?" said my young lady. "Who's here?"

Miss Brown ran over a string of names, which I perceived were all masculine.

"Oh, I'm so glad Henry Smith's here!" said number one. "Isn't he a nice young man? always so spirity and full of

fun. I mean Henry shall kiss me under the misletoe. Here, can you arrange these in my hair?"

"For my part," said another girl, "I admire James Ridley: *so* gentleman-like, isn't he?"

"Oh I can't bear him," said a sprightly girl, who had been humming a tune, and seemed incapable of keeping her feet still. "He's so shy."

"Is he?" said another. "Do introduce me to him; I like to get hold of a shy young man. It's such fun. *I'll* brighten him up, see if I don't."

"Is your young man coming, Miss Jakes?"

"He may come or stop away," said Miss Jakes, tossing her head. "He's been in the sulks for a week. But if he does come, I'll pay him off, for I intend to flirt desperately with Henry Smith," and in the lightness of her heart she commenced practising a few steps.

"There, go away, you're a bungler," said the young lady, whose roses came to nothing in my hands. "Do, dear, come and help me."

There were so many last touches before the young ladies could be satisfied with their appearaces, that a full hour elapsed before I felt myself at liberty to seek Mrs. Brown, and learn what I was to do next. I had been standing all the day, and felt very weary, but I had been given to understand that I should be wanted all the evening.

All the company was assembled in the drawing-room, and I found Mrs. Brown in the usual sitting-room, where tables were spread for tea. I found with her a young man whom I had not seen before, and as I was retreating, she called me back.

"This is the governess as I told you about," she said. "My son, Miss Marples."

Mr. Brown, Junior, was taller than his father, which is not saying a great deal, as the latter gentleman was remarkably short; so that I inferred the "bigness" of which Miss Amelia spoke had reference solely to the young man's estimate of himself. He had his father's nose on a larger scale; the same black hair and eyes; and whiskers of the same hue and an incipient moustache, were just visible. He was dressed elaborately, I supposed for the occasion, and wore

an eye-glass, which he elevated in order to take a better view of myself.

"Vewy pwapaw," he exclaimed, meaning my engagement, I suppose. "I hope you'll have the children in bettaw audwa. 'Pon my sawl she's pwetty."

"Hold your tongue, Francis James, do!" said his mother. "Miss Marples, do you attend to your own business; put them spoons in the sarcers, and fetch the sandwidges and all the things hoff the sideboard; there's room in the middle of the table."

Mrs. Brown, spoke in a sharp, authoritative manner, as if she wished to counteract the possible effects of her son's admiration. The idea was monstrous enough, but I was obliged to entertain it.

The two went on talking, as the young ladies had done, reckoning me for nothing.

"I think you might have brought one on 'em just for tonight," said Mrs. Brown. "It's too bad."

"My dear madam, it's impossible," said the young man. "If these fellows once got a scent of the shop it would be all up with me. I don't want to dispawage your company, but it wouldn't do, 'pon my soul."

"I don't see the use of your spending so much money over your fine folks, if you can't ask any on 'em home," said Mrs. Brown.

"The old boy," observed Mr. Brown, Junior, "talks of retiring into the country, in which case I may manage to intwoduce some of the fellows. At present it's out of the question. I intend to make myself vewy agweeable tonight, and I think that's as much as you can expect fwom me at pwesent."

"I'm sure your par'll call out at them mustachers."

"He's a queaw old boy! pewhaps he will, but I cannot be a slave to pwejudices. I must positively join the ladies, or they'll think me wude."

I caught a glance of him as he walked out, holding his stiff collar with both hands and adjusting his head in it. I wondered if the ladies really missed him or wanted him.

"A fine young man, isn't he?" said Mrs. Brown.

I opened my mouth to say something, but remained silent. I bowed my head in assent.

"He's very clever, and every way above his station, though that's nothing to be sneezed at, for his par's got money," continued Mrs. Brown. "But Francis James allays would keep the best company,—Lord Randy, and Sir John Boulder, and Colonel Spanks, and a lot of them sort of people. He'll be sadly out of his helemet to-night."

The young man certainly gave me no high opinion of the company he kept. His cool, easy impudence was at once so offensive and so ridiculous that one did not know whether to laugh or to get angry. I had a pretty clear perception of his being altogether beneath contempt.

Mrs. Brown gave me directions about superintending the tea-table provided for the younger visitors, and then departed in order to collect them. Simultaneously with the young people appeared all the servants with all sorts of viands. Nothing I had as yet seen astonished me more than the gormandizing qualities of the atoms of humanity over whom I presided. Piles of plum-cake, plain cake, muffins, tea-cakes, tarts, biscuits, toast, bread and butter, shrimps, ham sandwiches, potted meats, and oceans of tea, disappeared with a rapidity that to me became quite alarming. One little boy, with his mouthful, declared that he always drank seven cups when he went to a party, and I believe he took even more. When all were satisfied and dismissed (the elder visitors took tea in the drawing-room), I and Mary sat down, and afterwards helped to clear the things away.

I was very busy when one of the young ladies entered from the drawing-room, dragging after her a little boy, who, with his hands before his face, appeared to me to be crying, but I soon found he was half chocking himself with a fit of suppressed laughter.

"You wicked little wretch," said his sister, shaking him violently, "see if I don't tell of you when we get home. I've a good mind to send you home now. You," she said, addressing me, "keep him here; I want to punish him."

The boy did not seem to care much; he went into a cor-

ner, and had a good laugh by himself. I asked him what had amused him so much.

"It's her," he said, pointing towards the drawing-room; "she's so funny."

"He's very naughty," said Mary; "he's been making game of Miss Melia."

"She's like 'Humpty dumpty sat on the wall,'" said the boy. "I shall laugh at her;—what's she so ugly for then?"

I tried to reason with him, to make him understand that she could not help it; that God might punish him by making him also deformed; but he kept on tittering and I could make nothing of him. And little can be made of children whose character, early perverted at home, becomes fixed before they are turned over to those expected to educate them. They are educated already, for the first lessons of life determine the bent of all after-teaching.

Presently Mrs. Brown came in to ask if the boy would go back and be good, and he made a half-promise.

"You'd better come in now," she said to me, "and you can look after the children. Meely's put me out with coming down; I didn't want her to, it's all her par's fault. Now mind, when they begin to dance you play the pianer."

I followed her into the room. The glaring light, and the crowd, and the noise, confused me. Then the heat was stifling. There were several new arrivals, men and women, young and elderly; there was a deal of shouting, and loud laughter, and clapping of hands, and sprightly conversation, and running to and fro of children; and in the midst of the general hubbub some one was producing a crashing noise out of the piano. There was a twelfth-cake, and a drawing of characters was going on, that every now and then produced frantic exclamations and much mirth. I was looking out for Amelia, who was seated on a high chair at the extremity of the room, with a table before her, when I was requested to take out two children who were sick. No wonder, eating rich cake, and sucking oranges, and drinking wine, after such a meal as they had lately made!

I was kept employed until at length the folding doors that connected the two rooms were thrown open, and a clear space was made for dancing. The children's dancing-

master was present with his violin, and I was to accompany him on the piano. Meanwhile I had had time enough to look around me and receive certain impressions. It struck me that the elder girls, with their giddiness, and affectation, and readiness to make advances, were unlike anything I had ever heard or read of; that the young men, shallow, and conceited (as they well might be), and evidently great in frivolities, were but indifferent samples of the species to which they belonged; that the elder men were coarser than seemed quite proper; the women strongly giving to slander, (I overheard some of them who were gathered into little confidential groups); and that altogether there was an absence of refinement and real good feeling, that, united with the noise and heat, and my own weariness, inspired me with sensations bordering upon disgust. If all this time I was unconsciously exalting myself above those around me, I was sufficiently despised in turn; for, except that Mr. Brown, Junior, had once approached to ask if I did not find it "vewy wawm," no one had spoken to me since I entered the room.

I played until a late hour when all the children were sent home; and then I played on, as the elder visitors had only just commenced in earnest. During a pause, Mr. Brown (who did not make his appearance till the shop was closed) brought me a glass of wine and a biscuit.

"Ain't you tired?" he said; "let somebody else play a bit, and you have a hop."

This was an odd remedy for being tired, but I told him I had not learned to dance.

"Not learned to dance! Oh, never mind; you can jump about to the tune, and that's as much as most on 'em does. I've got a partner for you,—come, now, get up a bit."

Mr. Brown meant to be kind, and I rose up, though without any intention of dancing. To my horror, I beheld the two apprentices, headed by the shopman, Tony, looking more hideous and diabolical than ever in his holiday dress.

"This young man," said Mr. Brown, bringing the monster forward, "wants you for a partner. Tony, talk to the young woman a bit; I want all on you to be jolly to-night."

Thinking, I dare say, that he had done a good deal for me, Mr. Brown walked away.

I turned to the piano and sat down again.

"What a gal you are!" said Tony, leaning his arms on the instrument, and approaching me so closely that I was compelled to rise again. "Come, now, if you'll be my partner I won't say nothing about you knows what."

I could not speak to the man, even to repulse him; there were no words expressive of the deep disgust I felt, and I walked hastily across the room and seated myself beside the deformed girl.

"Are you tired?" I asked.

"No; I like to see 'em. I wish they knew how I hated 'em all, fine and handsome as they think theirselves. They're been laughing at me, and I can laugh at them."

"You should not notice children," I said; "they don't know what they do."

"Oh, it's not the children, it's every one of 'em. I see it, though they think me a fool as well as humpbacked and ugly. Never you mind."

"But you are not ugly," I said, "and if you liked you might look handsomer than any one in this room."

"What a one you are for gammon!"

"Nay, I am quite serious. You might, by thinking kindly of every one, and wearing a bright, pleasant look. You would be so much happier, too."

"You've got that out of them tracts, and they're all lies. You should see how Mar flies out if anybody offends her a bit; and Matilda Jane,—Lord, she'd make you stare! Let me alone about looking pleasantly when I hate everybody. I could scratch their eyes out!"

I had been preaching, as many do, what I could not myself practice. The odious Tony came up and I shrank from him as if he had been something venomous.

"I wants Miss Marples to be my partner, and she won't," he said. "Try and persuade her, Miss Meliar."

"Try yourself," said Amelia. "What do I care about your partners and you jigging about like fools? Now they're a beginning it. Law how I do hate 'em!"

There was a sudden tumult in the room, which resounded

with shrill screams. The gentlemen had got the ladies under the mistletoe, and if the latter liked it rather than otherwise, they made an odd sort of demonstration. I remembered the threat of the odious man, Tony, and I shrank further into the corner with a shiver of horror. How this availed me nothing,—how I was forcibly dragged forward and kissed by every man in the room, Tony amongst the rest, I will pass slightly over. When I was at length released I burst into tears.

"Law, if she ain't a crying!" exclaimed one of the girls.

"What nonsense!" said several.

"She wants kissing again," said Mr. Henry Smith, the greatest puppy where all were great that way, "and pon my honor if I wasn't out of breath—"

"Come, come, let's have done with it," said Mrs. Brown. "And deary me, Miss Marples, I'm surprised at your making a piece of work in my house, as if we didn't know what's proper. Bless us! if these young ladies isn't too fine to be kissed, *you* don't need to cry out."

"What disgusting affectation!" said Miss Brown as she flounced past me.

I had, indeed, only made myself ridiculous; and my tears dried up as if my eyes had been balls of fire. I was allowed to sit at the piano again, and the party broke up at four o'clock in the morning.

During another week the children had a holiday, and I was plentifully supplied with needle-work. I had, besides, general instructions, to improve, Miss Brown in music and French; but that young lady had a profound contempt for my capacity, and the plan proved a failure. When I at length commenced with the younger children I found them so deficient in the commonest kinds of knowledge that I set about giving them some instruction in English before I attempted French, and asked for such books as I required, and which I did not find in the house. There was some demur about supplying me. Mrs. Brown did not see the use of wasting so much time about "grammar and such like." Arithmetic was very well, but geography might be learned from the newspapers, and she thought history all stuff. She reminded me over and over again that she

wanted the children to learn music and French. However, I had a little of my own way, and I set to in earnest; and a more refractory or unpromising set of pupils never fell into mortal hands. Accustomed to have their own way, and seeing me treated as a menial, it was impossible to obtain any authority over them. Wanting capacity one way, they made up in another. They were very ingenious at turning everything into ridicule, so that it was impossible to fix their attention seriously for five minutes together. After doing my best, I was compelled to ask Mrs. Brown to interpose with her authority, and then she thought my system must be wrong, as the children had done very well at school. I soon found that I must not entertain any hope of giving satisfaction.

It was trying enough to live entirely upstairs with these children and Miss Amelia, who had conceived a positive dislike to me for having been such a hypocrite as to pretend not liking to be kissed. Amelia hated hypocrites above everything; she hated those who submitted to be kissed and liked it, but my affectation had disgusted her as it did Miss Brown.

I had been in the house about three months when, one evening, I was sent for down stairs. I found Mr., Mrs., and Miss Brown, and an elderly man in the sitting-room. I was desired to sit down, and Mrs. Brown asked me if I had heard anything about Mr. Chaundy.

I had not, and said so.

"He's took to prison for debt, howsomever," said Mrs. Brown. "I'm sure we thought he was quite a gentleman when we let him come here. Do you know anything of his family?"

I did not.

"How long did you know him afore you come here?"

"About three weeks."

"Queer, ain't it?" said Mr. Brown.

"I thinks it very queer," said Mrs. Brown, "and he knowed nothing of you afore?"

"No."

"It's a good job as he didn't borrow money from us," said Mr. Brown.

"I hated the sight of him" said Miss Brown; "he wasn't like a respectable clergyman."

"No more he was," said Mrs. Brown. "He was a odd man, allays joking with the servants and lowering hisself. I wonder if he was a clergyman after all, or a imposter?"

"Oh! he was a clergyman," said the visitor; "I had that from Mr. Fulton."

"You can go up stairs, Miss Marples," said Mrs. Brown.

I augured no good from this conversation and Mrs. Brown's manner. On three or four occasions I had been tortured by Tony's threats to tell all he knew, and I was not sure that he had not told. I abhorred the state of dependence that subjected me to this low malice, and that made it a terror to me. What had I to fear or to be ashamed of after all; why could I not speak to Mrs. Brown as a Christian woman, and tell all the truth? How I warred with myself; how I scorned her, feeling that this was impossible!

The news of our friend's misfortune grieved me deeply. Comparing him with others, I knew that he was a noble, warm-hearted man, and I was just beginning to feel how really friendless we were in the world. I expected Jem on the following day, and I determined to ask leave to visit my grand-father so that I might learn all the particulars.

I wanted to see my grand-father for many reasons. It was a satisfaction to me, even while I wished to remain where I was, if possible, to believe that matters were coming to a crisis. My borrowed dignity, of *not* being the niece of a charwoman, sat too heavily upon me, because it was enforced. What, after all, did Mrs. Brown suppose me to be? Poor—or I should not have sought the shelter of her roof. I had not deceived her, for I had been asked no questions: yet I felt as if I had made myself liable to a charge of imposition. I was beginning to despise myself as well as others; and I thought that my grand-father would agree with me that this was an unwholesome state of feeling, that should be remedied at any price.

Letters had passed between us, and I knew that they were in other lodgings, and that my grand-father continued to obtain work. I knew, too, that Mr. Chaundy frequently visited them, and felt how much they would miss him. The

Browns, with their many friends, most probably did not possess an individual, one whose misfortunes or absence would have caused them regret.

And from what I had already observed, I could not help feeling that deep and strong affections were not common in the world. A great deal of sentiment that sounds very well, and that is very well in itself, has been written on the love of mother's; but ten to one that the reading of it brings before any experienced person such a host of unmistakeably real mothers of the Mrs. Brown class, intriguing heartlessly for sons or daughters, and by the example and constant ingrafting of selfishness desecrating all that might have been sacred between them, and hardening all that ought to have been malleable for good, that the attractive ideal glimmers in the distance like a lone star. And if the love, even of mothers, so far from being always a beautiful and a holy thing, is frequently made to look ugly and revolting, it is not wonderful that amongst brothers and sisters indifference should grow up into hatred, where unruly passions and self-interest divide them from the beginning. What most of the friendships and more serious after-connections of life come to under such circumstances, is best known to the millions who make up the population of this Christian land. I asked leave of a few hours' absence with some fear of a refusal, because there was not a minute in the day during which I had not plenty to do. Mrs. Brown, however, gave her consent very readily.

"O yes, you may go, certingly, Miss Marples. I was just going to tell you—leastways, I was to-morrow, when your month's up—that I must give you notice, as you don't quite suit as I expected. You can let your grand-father know, as I intend to behave handsome and allow you a month's notice."

This was saving me much trouble, though it was not exactly what I wanted. When I considered, however, that what with their rebellious habits, and want of capacity, and almost entire ignorance of everything else, it would be a long time before I could bring the young Browns forward in music and French, I could only feel that it was for the best. I was beginning, too, to have more confidence in my-

self; and I had a month before me to look out for another situation.

On the whole, I felt lighter in heart than I had done for a long time. On the following morning, when I was told that some one wanted me, I hurried down stairs, expecting to see Jem; but instead of him, I found a little girl of about ten years old. I asked her what had become of him.

"He's gone with the mister," she replied.

I asked her to wait till I was ready, and then to show me where my grand-father lived. She said she lived in the same house in Brook's Court, and I found it a close, unwholesome place, with tall, dingy houses, filled from basement to roof with lodgers.

I found my grand-father and Aunt Betsy, in a back room on the second floor, to which was added a large closet that held a bed. It was altogether a falling off from Mrs. Dent's rooms; and not having seen either of my relations for so long a time, I was struck by a painful alteration in their appearance. My Aunt's complexion had become sallow, and she was much thinner; and there was a wan, shadowy look about my grand-father that wrung my heart. I found him busily writing, and one of his favorite books lay on the table beside him: it was open; and when I glanced at the page my eye fell on these lines of Cotton's "Retirement;—"

"Good God! how sweet are all things here!
How beautiful the fields appear!
How cleanly do we feed and lie!
Lord! what good hours do we keep!
How quietly we sleep!
What peace, what unanimity!
How innocent from the lewd fashion
Is all our business, all our recreation!"

The dear, good old man! had he been trying to realise a dream of his old home, with its quietness, its cleanliness, its pure air and rural sights,—things he had loved so well? I spoke calmly, in spite the swelling of my heart, when we sat down together. Jem had brought the news of Mr. Chaundy's misfortune only a few days previously, and had been with him ever since. For perhaps the first time in his life, my grand-father regretted that he had not money.

"It would have been a pleasure to have helped so kind a friend," he said; "we must pray for him."

I told my own story, giving only the principal cause of my dismissal,—my not being able to impart French and music to the young people as if by magic.

"Well, well, you cannot do impossibilities," said my grand-father. "We must go to the register-office again."

I asked if we could not go that day, as I did not know when I could get out again, and my grand-father consented. Then we had a long talk about a hundred different matters; and he showed me the money—three pounds—which I had sent by Jem, and which he said he was saving for me. It was a satisfaction to know that he had not yet been compelled to make use of it, and I hoped to add to, instead of taking it away.

After dinner, we proceeded to the register-office, situated somewhere in the city. In a very crowded thoroughfare we wanted to cross the street, and were compelled to wait until several vehicles, apparently jammed together, went past. There was some quarrelling amongst the drivers.

"Take that fellow's number, will you?" called out an imperious voice. "He blocks up the way on purpose."

I looked in the direction of the speaker. He was seated in a handsome cab, with a servant in livery at his side. There was no mistaking the martial figure; the clear, bronze, complexion; the eagle eyes; the black hair, and moustache curling over the upper lip; the proud disdainful look that I had encountered only once before:—it was Colonel Leigh.

I gazed at him steadily and determinedly. *My* eyes, too, could flash back disdain and defiance, though they could not express the intense loathing with which, in my inmost soul, I regarded that man.

"Now, then! out of the way there!" he exclaimed.

Just before the whip fell, he looked full in my upturned face. It was evident that he recognised me, for he made an indecisive movement, pausing for a second; and then the heavy frown gathered upon his face:—he lashed the horse savagely, and passed from my sight.

For this my aunt had brought us together that day—

that we might know one another if we met in the world. To what purpose? If my grand-father saw him, he did not mention the subject, nor did I. We arrived at the register-office, and stated our business.

"Are you the young lady that called on Mrs. Wilton in Wimpole Street?" asked the man.

I told him I was.

"Then," he said, "she wants to see you again; you may call any morning at the same time."

We considered this an extraordinary piece of good fortune, and walked home rather gaily. I was particularly gratified, because Mrs. Wilton understood I had a difficulty about obtaining a character, and seemed inclined to pass it over; but when we arrived at home, my grand-father observed that I could at least obtain a character for good conduct from Mrs. Brown,—she had nothing to say against me that way.

I, however, had a fixed notion that Mrs. Brown's testimony any way was not desirable. I felt sure that she was dismissing me as a disreputable person, and one who had been palmed upon her under false pretences. It seemed clear to me that she had come to a knowledge of my "low connexions and bringings up," as Tony had it; and if this was sufficient to drive me out of her house, I could scarcely be considered respectable enough to enter Mrs. Wilton's.

In the course of the afternoon, Jem came in. I was surprised and pleased, too, to see him wear so bright a look. My grand-father asked him how Mr. Chaundy was.

"Oh, he's quite right," said Jem. "He told me to come down an' see if I could help you; an' if you'd come an' see him he'd be glad."

"That I will, certainly," said my grand-father.

"It must have grieved you to see Mr. Chaundy in such trouble," said Aunt Betsy.

"Lor' bless you, no," said Jem. "If they'd made a bishop on him I might a broken my heart, an' nobody to care. It's all for his good; that's where I take it. Trouble keeps his heart in the right place, an' mine too. When I go into that blessed Queen's Bench, you should see how he brightens up. "Jem,' says he, 'I don't know what I should do with-

out you, Jem.' That's what I call being *alive*. Do you think he'd say that to me if they'd a put him in a palace? By jingo!"

"A little selfishness about that, though, eh, Jem?" said my grand-father, smiling. "Well, we get on in this world some way."

He asked Jem if he knew whether Mr. Chaundy was likely to obtain his freedom soon; and Jem, apparently scouting the idea, said he thought not. What should he for? There was good living at the Bench altogether: he didn't see, for his part, how anybody could die there.

And then Jem looked in the place where the coals and wood where kept, and finding the stock low, rose up for the purpose of replenishing it.

"Any more orders?" he asked.

"You are a handy fellow, and a willing one, Jem," said my grand-father; "but we must not impose upon your good nature all along in this way. How are you to live if you work gratis, as you do for us? You must allow us to pay you something—it is only right."

"Don't you say nothin' about that 'ere," said Jem. "How am I to live? Lor' bless you, I fatten amazin' among kind-spoken people. I live up here, an' I live down yonder at the Bench. It's jolly living at the Bench. I've got flesh since Mr. Chaundy was took."

Poor Jem seemed to live on his philosophy, which is more than wiser men have been able to do. His constant good will and eagerness to oblige certainly had the desired effect of drawing us towards him.

During his absence my grand-father wrote a letter to Mr. Chaundy, which he afterwards gave him to deliver; and then, in order to save my grand-father's time, Jem insisted upon seeing me back to Mrs. Brown's.

Jem's simplicity and singleness of heart, and perfect reliance on the good faith established between us, were conspicuous in this offer. It happily never occurred to his honest head that I might object to such a chaperon in broad day-light, respectable though he was, and evidently proud of his charge, and entertaining beyond all this, as he walked at my side, an idea that something precious to himself, and

nothing to that dense, driving crowd, linked together. This was the impression upon me of his manner altogether, and I was right. Yet what a forlorn object he was to be looked upon by those who did not look close enough; and who would think of doing that? Dressed in ragged clothes that had never fitted him, in patched, dirty boots, twisted into odd shapes; without a hat, for he never wore one, and with his grizzled hair floating about his singularly weather-beaten face. I thought of that other man, from whom I had a passing glance of repulse earlier in the day, and of the difference betwixt the two to me and to the world. If there was a God who noted these things, how stood each of them with Him? Perhaps, even whilst I felt my faith shaken, this was His way of teaching me to look forward to that "great day of the Lord." Well, I should see.

"There's not a many," said Jem, in allusion to my dismissal from Mrs. Brown's, "there's not a many as lights on the right sort at first. Lor' bless you! look at me—never met with a kind-spoken individual till I see Mr. Chaundy. I knowed them folks wouldn't do; but you'll meet the right at last, not a doubt on it."

"After waiting as long as you did, I suppose, Jem," I said, bitterly.

"It don't seem so long when its over," said Jem. "Nothin' of the sort; an' then, when you meets with this here kind, you seem to have known 'em all your life. That makes up, you see."

This was an odd kind of encouragement, and I managed differently, if not better, for myself. I did not care about meeting with kind people; I only craved the power of defending myself against the world *en masse*. There was a stern determination in my spirit when I contemplated this possible long life of cheerless and abject slavery. It was not my fault if I was not constituted to bear it, and at the worst I possessed the power of releasing myself.

Brought up as I had been, it was odd that with all my restless energy, and pride, and impatience of control, I could set myself up in judgment, and reason and decide so coolly as I did. Odd that the long teachings of my grand-father should be so suddenly neutralized by the opinions of Uncle

Stephen, and the first lesson taught me by the injustice of the world. I felt all this at the time. I cannot help it, I said in self-defence; I can battle rather than endure; and who shall teach me that it is wrong to war with evil?

I had a new favor to ask Mrs. Brown,—leave to call on Mrs. Wilton. I made the request that night, and she seemed at once to be incredulous, and to be annoyed at the idea of my so readily obtaining another place.

"Why you don't mean to say as you've had time to look for another sitiwation?"

I explained that I had seen Mrs. Wilton some months ago, and that she wished me to call upon her again.

"Oh! you're very fortunate, I think," said Mrs. Brown. "As for giving you a chariter, I don't know what to say, I'm sure; such things as has come to my knowledge."

"I believe I shall not require you to give me a character," I replied.

"Good gracious, Miss Marples! don't shout like that in my house! You fairly made me start. There's no call for you to be imperent."

I said I had no wish to be impertinent, and did not know that I had been.

"You must understand," said Mrs. Brown, "that if I'm to pay you for the next month, I can't do with you going out every day to look after places."

I assured her that I should not trouble her about going out again; and giving a reluctant consent, she dismissed me.

On the following morning my grand-father again accompanied me to Wimpole Street. All night I had been thinking that Mrs. Wilton must be possessed of some liberality of feeling, or she would not have sent for me again. Upon this presumed liberality I determined to throw myself, by telling her exactly how we were situated in London, and what reason I had for believing that Mrs. Brown would not recommend me. I had some reliance on the French lady, too, if she chanced to be there. I knew that in France governesses were trained from the humblest classes, and that their origin was no detriment to their advancement. I told

my grand-father all this, and he approved of what I was about to do. I found Mrs. Wilton alone.

"O, you have been informed, I suppose, that I wished to see you again," she said. "The fact is, I have met with so much selfishness amongst those from whom I had a right to expect something better, that in very despair I am compelled to turn to less promising subjects. I think I understood, from our last conversation, that you were illegitimate?"

The blood rushed to my face as I inclined my head in assent.

"Is your father a gentleman?"

"By birth and education he should have been one," I replied.

"And he takes no notice of you?"

"My grand-father has never troubled him, and I am sure I never shall," I replied. "I was educated in the hope that I should be able to earn my own living."

"That's quite proper," she said. "Now, I don't wish to hurt your feelings, but it is necessary I should understand a little about you. What have you been doing since I saw you last?"

I gave her a full account of my engagement with Mrs. Brown: I told her what my grand-father was doing, what Aunt Betsy had been reduced to do, and my bad odor with Mrs. Brown in consequence. Beyond this objection to my low connections and to my method of teaching the children I believe Mrs. Brown could say nothing against me.

"If I conclude to engage you," said Mrs. Wilton, when she had heard me to the end, "you will perceive that I waive some disadvantages. As you are situated a permanent home will be a good thing for you. And as you seem well-behaved and competent to teach, I am willing to try if we can get on together. As to the huckster's wife, I shall not think of asking a recommendation from her. When do you leave her?"

"A month to-day."

"Then, in the meantime I should like to see your grand-father. It will be proper to let him know the terms upon which I receive you."

I told her that my grand-father had accompanied me and was then waiting for me below.

"O, very well," she said, and ringing the bell desired that he might be shown up.

My grand-father was quite a gentlemanly as well as a venerable looking old man. I felt proud of him as he advanced and saluted Mrs. Wilton with the natural courtesy that implied respect without servility. I felt sure that Mrs. Wilton was favorably impressed by his appearance.

"Sit down, sir," she said, pointing to a chair. "I have been talking to your grand-daughter, and I have some hopes that she will suit me. With your permission, I presume, she has told me how she is situated; and I have no doubt you will see the advantage of her having a comfortable and happy home. This I can offer, and will continue to her if she gives satisfaction, and I trust she will."

"She has always been a dear, good child," said my grand-father, surveying me with tears in his eyes. "I can answer for her doing her best; and for her remembering with gratitude that you have overlooked some unfavorable circumstances that might have weighed against her with others.—She is friendless in the world, and quite aware that her future welfare depends upon her own good conduct. I can trust her without fear."

"Well! upon my word, I'm quite inclined to trust her," said Mrs. Wilton. "Then we seem to understand each other. I overlook some things, as you say, in the hope that your grand-daughter will be satisfied with my offer of a comfortable home. Then this is settled. At the end of the month I shall expect you, Miss Marples."

We rose and took leave. I don't know how it happened that it never occurred to either of us that nothing had been said about any salary. Such was the fact, however. My grand-father especially was elated; he considered my present engagement as a great step forward, and eulogised Mrs. Wilton's liberality in dispensing with a recommendation from others. For my part, too, I felt grateful to her; and the prospect of being amongst refined people gratified me more than anything else.

During the remainder of my time at Mrs. Brown's,

found cause to rejoice still more in the prospect of getting away. Frequent quarrels with Mr. Brown on their son's account soured her temper so that she quarrelled with every thing and everybody; and these family disagreements brought more prominently forward the unamiable traits in the characters of Miss Brown and Amelia. As to Tony, having fulfilled his mission with regard to me, he seemed inclined to leave me to myself.

I managed to part from this family quietly, though every member of it (I do not include the aristocratic Francis James), took some pains to let me see they were glad to be rid of me. I remained a few days with my grand-father and Aunt Betsey, mending and replenishing my clothes; and in this way two out of my four pounds, disappeared. Jem came whilst I was there, and he still continued to speak of Mr. Chaundy with great glee. My grand-father, however, gave a different account of him.

"He bears his troubles like a man," he said, "but he is evidently fretting himself to-death. It is quite painful to hear him speak of relations who could help him and won't.—Then he is becoming very stout without having any wholesome flesh upon him; he smokes all day long and eats nothing, and if he remains in yonder confined place, I am sure he will die."

I had the same thought about my grand-father and the close unwholesome atmosphere in which he lived. Every time I saw him he seemed to be more wan and shadowy; his gait more feeble, so that I gave up all hope of realizing the first wish of my heart, which had been to make his last days happy. If I resigned this cherished expectation with a pang, it is no wonder that I dwelt with added bitterness upon the conduct of those who had labored to crush him down for well-doing, and who had succeeded but too well. The God in whom he trusted for help stood afar off; no one sorrow or indignity was to be spared him, and I, how could I hope a better fate for myself, deserving far less as I did? The ice about my heart would not thaw, but I possessed even more of indomitable resolution. I do not know what it was that made me long for the quicker passing of time, seeing that I only expected from time that it would bring forth more

evil. The slow progress of days and months was, however, a great weariness to me; I was impatient without expectation, because the aspirations within me had as yet taken no shape.

CHAPTER VII.

I ENTERED upon my duties at Mrs. Wilton's and found some reason to be satisfied. She treated me with consideration, and the children, who were almost too well behaved, rendered me ready obedience. When I say that Mrs. Wilton treated me considerately, I mean that she always addressed me politely, if not kindly, and that went a great way with me. In other respects I dare say there was much that a more fastidious or less dependent person than myself would have objected to. The Wiltons had altogether the appearance of people living beyond their means, by striving to make a great show with little. The servants considered them mean and never stopped long, and little comfort was provided for any one. There were seven children and one nurse-maid, so that I had to take part of her duties, and one that fell entirely upon me was to fashion the children's clothes out of Mrs. Wilton's old ones. Then we were badly lodged, crowding together with the children, and fed only meagrely. As I had never lived luxuriously, nor seen much of what is called pleasure, as, too, I had no objection to hard work, I did not feel inclined to murmur, except generally at fate, for allotting to me a life uncongenial from its monotony, and dependence, and obscurity. Mrs. Wilton was a gay woman, with a crowd of fine acquaintances who seemed to take her a good deal from home. Her husband, I learned, was a city merchant. I sometimes caught a glimpse of him, and thought he had a very care-worn, down-cast look. I often fancied that he could not feel very happy in the home from which his wife was so frequently absent, leaving him to dine alone, and go out or pass the evening by himself. I began, too, after a lapse of some

months, to consider my own affairs; to wonder whether Mrs. Wilton really meant to give me any salary, and what I should do if she did not. I had poor accounts from Aunt Betsy of my grand-father, whose eyes began to fail him so that he could no longer write quickly, or well enough to give satisfaction. This was a terrible blow to all of us, as we could only anticipate that he would become still more disabled. I had not the confidence in Mrs. Wilton that would have led me to speak to her of this calamity with the hope that she would pay me something in consequence. I dreaded offending her and being sent back, a burden upon those who were already poor enough; and yet it was almost as bad to remain where I was with the consciousness of being unable to help them. I determined, at all events to ask leave to visit them, and then I could ask my grand-father what he thought it proper for me to do.

I had been with Mrs. Wilton nearly five months, and as she allowed her children no summer holiday, I had had none. I thought she would not consider it unreasonable that I wished to go home for a day.

"It is quite impossible to spare you to-morrow, Miss Marples," she said in reply to my request; "or indeed any day this week. We will see about it next week. But I mean to give you a treat, and Mary Jane and Raymond too. To-morrow I shall take you to a meeting of the Anti-Slavery Association. It will do you all good to understand what privileges you enjoy in this free and happy country; how favored you are above thousands of your fellow creatures who are frightfully oppressed in other lands, because they have a dark skin. Oh, I think it quite shocking, and that it is especially the duty of people with families to set their faces against such a system. There will be very distinguished people there, too, and it will be quite a grand sight."

"Will papa go?" asked Raymond, a boy eleven years old.

"O no! papa has his business to attend to and must not be disturbed."

And, indeed, Mr. Wilton, who had the dull look that "all work and no play" gives to a man, never seemed to be considered in his wife's schemes or recreation. It was very

rarely that she thought of the children in that way; and never having been spoilt, but rather severely kept down, all of them had something of the quiet manner and general listlessness of their father. This was particularly the case with the two eldest. All were obedient without displaying any alacrity, and all were deficient in the buoyant spirit of childhood and youth, down to the baby, who tumbled about amongst us and got on as well as it could.

Neither Mary Jane, the eldest, nor Raymond, seemed to think more of this treat than I did; however, we all prepared to go on the following day. Mrs. Wilton, who had no carriage of her own, manœuvred pretty successfully to get the use of those of her acquaintances, and on this occasion she contrived to distribute us amongst three parties, so that we set off in grand style. I forget the name of the building at which we alighted. We walked up a broad staircase and entered an immense hall, in which was a gallery. The place was crowded to excess, even when we entered, and many had not yet arrived. Many distinguished people, as Mrs. Wilton had said, seemed to be there. I had never before seen such a waving of feathers, and glistening of silks, and fluttering of gauzes. These seemed to me the right sort of people to understand and appreciate the privileges they enjoyed in this free and happy country. As for me, my refractory spirit was at work to consider what was the particular privilege for which I was individually required to be thankful. The universal privilege, to labor, had hitherto proved very unproductive to myself, and I was lamentably ignorant of any other for which I stood indebted to the land of my birth. Perhaps it was a great matter for such as I was to be allowed to bask in the light of those distinguished countenances, whose excess of radience only served to show more distinctly the realities about myself; to gaze upon that splendor, one of the glories of the land, called forth purposely to blazon the Christian meekness, the benevolent seal, that gave to the poor negro so august a band of sisters and brothers.

But outward show made little impression upon me. In thought, I tore down the gay trappings and stripped that gorgeously attired assembly to the heart's core, and wonder-

ed how much would be left to get up another exhibition if a swift and sudden desolation were to come and annihilate all that was not genuine around me. That much was spurious was evident enough in the manner of all. Taking my ideas of Christian courtesy from books rather than men, the excessive politeness of polite people amongst themselves struck me as being at once vulgar and hollow. I thought so on that day, when I witnessed so much cringing and bowing, accompanied by an idiotic sort of smirk on the countenances of the men: so much affectation, and fluttering about, and ready smiling, and majestic sweeping of plumed heads amongst the women. A very important-looking, middle-aged gentleman, hurrying past me before I had yet found a seat, gave me a sudden push that sent me two or three paces foreward, and a card which I had in my hand fell to the floor. He turned round with an impatient glance that lighted upon me and the card too, and then hurried on. He had evidently comprehended in an instant of time that I did not belong to that grade of society to which his attentions were exclusively due, therefore he offered no apology, and left me to pick up the card. I set my foot upon it; and from that pedestal, with the thoughts that were then upon me, I could have uttered more startling truths than met my ear through the day; for there was nothing so monstrous in the fact of bad men boldly persevering in an evil curse, as appeared in the hourly contradictions practised by those pretending to abound in Christian love, and humility, and charity; practised, too, in broad daylight, as a matter of course, and commented upon by none, unless by some such insignificant observer as myself, whose private opinion went for nothing, and whose aggrieved feeling stood no chance of notice from the world.

After placing myself and the children in our seats, Mrs. Wilton bent down and whispered:—

"You will remain where you are until I come to you; I shall sit at some distance. There will be a collection, Miss Marples; you will give your mite, and the children will give their mites. It is really a blessed privilege to be allowed to do something in such a cause."

This privilege, which took the shape of an obligation,

filled me with dismay. I had a small purse in my pocket containing four shillings out of the five given me by my grand-father for pocket-money. I had dreaded spending a penny more than was necessary, and now, how much was I to part with in this grand place, and for so stupendous an object as the emancipation of a whole race of people?

If those who are personally free from real wants and cares, are incapable of feeling otherwise than superficially for actual distress and oppression, others may make light of it by comparison with their own need and sorrow. I was, perhaps, as capable of sympathizing with the down-trodden negroes as any there, yet I could not avoid feeling that I rather stood in need of help for myself, than of being called upon to help any. Mine seemed the worse case, too, because as an inhabitant of this free and happy country, I stood no chance of having my wants recognized or cared for.

A tall, thin man, dressed in black, ascended a platform and commenced an address. He held a white pocket-handkerchief in his right hand, which he flourished and occasionally applied to his eyes, and I saw that others followed his example. He had himself seen much of the negro race in different parts of the world, and he certainly entered into a long detail of horrors. His discourse created a great sensation, accompanied by a variety of exclamations; and his appeals to the people of England were greeted with bursts of applause. I was not so readily moved to enthusiasm. I could not help thinking that, except in the sale and separation of bodies, there was not much difference in the kind of oppression that may be and is exercised everywhere. Even here, affections may be crushed out and down; souls bartered, outraged, maddened—or pushed aside as the most worthless of all commodities, and here, too, effort may be rendered availless. I thought no more of this, as speaker after speaker rose up, and the sensation around me deepened. One gentleman, of whom a lady near me said, "That's Lord Colvin," called especially upon the higher classes, whose sensibilities were refined by education and habit, to set a noble example to the country at large by a unanimous expression of their abhorrence of the system of slavery, and of their sympathy with the oppressed. "And as this appeal of ours

is intimately connected with the labors of our missionaries," he continued, "I shall now resign the subject to abler hands; to one whose whole life has been a labor of love, devoted to this cause above all others. And what friend of the negro has not heard his name? What enemy of slavery has not had his voice borne to him by many winds, thundering forth the anathemas of the Gospel against the oppressions of earth! Who amongst you does not know him, personally or by report for his good works go before him, and his flock call him 'blessed?' I need scarcely add that I allude to the good, the pious, the venerable Thomas Selby, dean of ——."

A loud burst of applause greeted the name, and it rose to an uproar when the dean himself appeared upon the platform. And a very venerable and good old man he did look, with his pale, thin face, and white hair, and half-closed eyes; and very meekly he seemed to bear his honors as he stood slightly inclining his head, and with his hands crossed upon his bosom. To what purpose did the quickened blood in my heart rise up against this man, whom thousands were eager to honor? Who, in that vast assembly would have cared for me, or what I considered my wrongs? Was there one that would not have defended him, and said that he had done right? No, I believe not. For it is true that in England there is that worst species of slavery which originates in a belief that from poverty can proceed no good thing, and that wealth and rank can commit no evil. This is the universal creed, whatever else is preached, and in spite of noisy declamation to the contrary,—in spite, too, of the free and honest efforts of independent and liberal-minded men to introduce something better. It is that which a nation practises in its daily life, not that which it declaims about, that influences the heart and mind of a people.

I, who knew how proudly the dean could bear himself; I, who had never obtained a passing glance from him, though he had often swept close past me in his priestly garments; how could I help marvelling at the deep humility with which he confessed his unworthiness before that brilliant company; at the benignant sweetness of his countenance as he turned from side to side, as if bestowing a mental benediction upon the whole human race? How could even I

suspect him of harboring pride in his heart? How resolutely he disclaimed all praise for what he had done! How his own short-comings stared him in the face when he suddenly found himself famous through having performed a very small part of a large duty! He was altogether weak, he said; only strong in this—having a good cause and determination to do his best for the future. Then he spoke of the missions, and, notwithstanding his previous disclaimer, alluded to the part he had taken throughout a long life in promoting them. When he finally called upon those assembled to contribute largely for the purposes that had been specified, there was another thunder of applause that stunned me, and then there was a jingling of money upon plates, and I thought of my four shillings and wondered what I should do.

I did not wonder long. A gentleman collector approached where I was sitting. His erect figure, and handsome face, with its proud eyes and haughty lip, were always present with me. And now we had met again, and Colonel Leigh handed the plate, nearly filled with gold, to the young Wiltons, who placed some silver on it. It lingered before me. I had taken two shillings from my purse, but I grasped them tightly in my right hand, and placed my open left hand for an instant, palm upwards, upon the plate. I did not consider what any one else might think; at the moment, I thought only of him. He looked down into my upturned face, and an almost imperceptible expression of annoyance, disgust perhaps, swept over his own. He passed on, and I heard several ladies inquiring who that was, so noble-looking and so handsome.

"Why you didn't give anything, Miss Marples," said Mary Jane in an astonished whisper.

"I had nothing to give," I replied.

"But what did you put your hand so for? It looked so odd!"

"To let him understand that I had nothing."

We were compelled to sit still a long time, during which this jingling of money went on, accompanied by a hum of voices. When Mrs. Wilton at length rejoined us, we moved

with the crowd down stairs, passing, as we went, a group of gentlemen, among whom stood the Dean and Colonel Leigh.

"How handsome that dark, military man is," said one of the ladies who accompanied Mrs. Wilton. "It's the dean's nephew, Colonel Leigh."

"O ma," said Raymond, "Miss Marples *did* make that gentleman stare."

"Make him stare?" said Mrs. Wilton. "What do you mean?"

But there was no time for further conversation then; we got into our respective carriages, and drove home. Raymond had spoken out of his simple wonderment, and not with any thought of injuring me, but I foresaw that some trouble would arise out of the explanation. Great as was my horror of being asked if I had a father, the idea of him being identified was something worse, and altogether unbearable. I must get out of the scrape as well as I could.

I had been sitting for some time amongst the children, describing to them what I had seen, when Mary Jane and Raymond came up.

"Ma wants to see you, Miss Marples," said Mary Jane, "and I believe she's cross with you for acting so, and not giving anything."

"I don't know what she should be cross for," said Raymond. "It amused me more than anything I saw."

I went down to Mrs. Wilton, who, as I expected, was exceedingly severe and polite.

"I have been greatly surprised, Miss Marples, by the account the children give of your conduct to-day. I think there must be a mistake."

"Not about my giving nothing," I said, "as I really had nothing to spare."

"That is very singular. But about placing your hand upon the plate?"

"I believe I did so in the confusion of the moment."

"Believe you did, and confusion of the moment! Do you mean to say you don't know what you're about? The people around you looking on, and such a great man as Colonel Leigh is, too,—it was quite dreadful—and such an insult to so noble a cause! I've often thought you an odd

person, Miss Marples, but I never expected anything like this. All my friends will know it, for Raymond has told, and I consider it a discredit to the house. And then it really surprises me that you should be without money for ordinary purposes. I have allowed you every advantage, and I think the least thing you can do is to keep up a respectable appearance in every way."

I ventured to mention my grand-father's affliction, and the probable consequences of it.

"Dear me," she said, "what is to become of you? and you wanting dresses, as I am sure you do. If you remain in my house, you must make a respectable appearance. I understood from your grand-father, when I engaged you, that if I provided you with a comfortable home he would do all the rest."

"I fear," I said, "that my grand-father did not understand that I was to receive no salary."

"Well, you do astonish me now! Why, bless my life, it was as clearly understood as could be. I repeated my terms over and over again, so that there might be no mistake. But this is what I have always found—selfishness, nothing but selfishness in governesses! But this is scarcely being honest, and what I did not expect from *you*, Miss Marples, or that old person, your grand-father, who seemed to me to be quite respectable. Well, what's to be done? This is putting me out of the way dreadfully."

I expressed my full conviction that my grand-father could not supply me with clothes—that I should be compelled to arne them for myself.

"Then I must consider our engagement to be at an end," said Mrs. Wilton. "As I engaged you for a permanency, as I supposed, we can say nothing about notice, though there is no occasion for you to go in a hurry. I suppose you can stop the week out."

I consented to do so, and sat down immediately to write to my grand-father. I was not quite sure that Mrs. Wilton was dealing unfairly with me. I had no recollection of her bargaining with my grand-father about supplying me with clothes; but I distinctly remembered that she had said nothing about giving me a salary. But considering how heavy

my various duties were, and how faithfully I had discharged them, I could not help considering her conduct unjust, as well as mean. I had certainly expected something better, and I was overwhelmed by the difficulties of my situation. When I thought of my grand-father in his helpless state, and my own eager wish to cheer as well as assist him, my heart grew more bitter against this world, with its insolent assumptions of superiority, its base readiness to take advantage of necessity, its various and always mean and vulgar methods for the furthering of self-interest and the gratification of malice. If these, I said, are the good Christians of this land, God defend me from them!—from Christianity altogether, if it leads to nothing better than this: rather let me be a heathen than live and die with no better prospect than that of herding for ever with these wolves, the legitimate representatives of a surely fabulous flock!

It was a strange idea to me, that of heaven being peopled with such souls as seemed to abound in the world. If there were any place of future punishment reserved for individuals like Uncle Stephen, I felt no doubt about preferring it, and I determined to prepare myself for it forthwith. As to the doctrine of non-resistance that my grand-father had taught me, how was it practicable, unless I consented to be crushed out of life altogether?

The young Wiltons, who possessed no strong feelings of any kind, exhibited no emotion at the prospect of losing me. I was only a governess, and governesses were plentiful enough, as they had some reason to know.

"I wonder what the next governess will be like," said little Alice. "I hope she won't be an ugly cross old thing."

"Pa says I shall go to a school, and he won't stand any more of ma's nonsense," said Raymond; "so I don't care."

This was all I heard from the children in reference to the subject. I was greatly exasperated with myself for allowing my heart to take an interest in those who did not want my regard—who, indeed, would only look upon it as a singularity, or a very great liberty. I had, however, become attached to the children, and it cost me a pang, though I would not acknowledge it, to wrench myself away.

One day, during Mrs. Wilton's absence, the servant desired me to go down to a lady, who had called upon her. I found her in the drawing-room, and she came forward to meet me. She was young, rather pretty, and very showily dressed, and I remembered her as one of those whom we had accompanied to the anti-slavery meeting.

"Is it true that you are about to leave Mrs. Wilton?" she asked.

I replied that it was.

"Then I want to ask a favor. When do you leave?"

"On Monday next."

"You have not obtained another situation?"

"No."

"This is my card. I wish you to call upon me on Wednesday morning. *Will* you call?"

I promised that I would.

"But, positively, you know. I am very earnest about it. You are quite sure you will come?"

I could not help smiling at this earnestness in a very giddy sort of young lady. I promised faithfully to call.

"And don't say anything to Mrs. Wilton about it: mind that. Now don't forget; I shall be quite disappointed if you are not punctual."

I promised once more, and the lady tripped down to her carriage. On the card I read the name "Mrs. Bontoft, Laurel Grove, St. John's Wood." What could she want with me, she who could not have any children old enough to require teaching?

I had no great expectation from her or any one, and I was absorbed in my present regrets. I had received a long letter from my grand-father, in which he said Mrs. Wilton had not used me well, but he desired me to trust in God, and keep a good heart. I had asked him to send Jem for my boxes, as I could not afford a coach, and he now informed me that Mr. Chaundy had died four days ago, and that Jem was lying on the floor of his cellar, overwhelmed with grief, and refusing alike food and consolation. He promised to send another person for my boxes.

The intelligence of Mr. Chaundy's death grieved me greatly. When and where should we find another friend

like him; so liberal in mind, so warm in feeling, so disinterested, so altogether free from the hypocrisy and the cant of this world? All kinds of trouble seemed to be following upon us at once, and on whatever side I looked, the prospect filled me with dismay.

On the appointed Monday, Mrs. Wilton took a very polite leave of me. A strange man brought Jem's truck, and my grand-father himself joined me in the street. I had not seen him for nearly five months; for so fearful had we all been of my giving offence by even a short absence from my duties, that I had not asked for a day's holiday. I was again struck by a great change in him. More wasted than ever, bent nearly double, and with his poor eyes telling their own tale, it almost broke my heart to look upon him. "O, my God!" I said mentally, "Thou teachest me that I do not exist alone by this body, for if I did not possess a soul capable of loathing and resisting the cruelty of this earth, the misery upon which I look would overwhelm me,—I should lie down at once and die!"

Aunt Betsy, too, had grown more gaunt and sallow.

"My eyes are not to be trusted," said my grand-father, "but this child is looking very ill, isn't she, sister?"

"She's paler and thinner," said Aunt Betsy, "but that was sure to be the case, living in London. You musn't dishearten her."

Aunt Betsy set a good example throughout our troubles, by striving to make the best of everything. I had learned that my grand-father had been compelled to give up writing altogether, that Aunt Betsy went out nearly every day to such hard labor as she could find, leaving him alone till late at night; and that the two subsisted upon her labor. What a life! I began to wonder if people felt as I did when they were going mad. I could not pray to God, for I could not believe that these heavy afflictions were for our good; and I turned with deep loathing from the world of which I had already seen too much.

But my spirit was too active and energetic to be kept down long. I saw that something must be done, and done speedily. I had at least learned a lesson,—I would not again drudge for any one without understanding what was

to be the reward of my labor, and I determined to seek some other kind of employment. Henceforth I would work with my hands instead of my head, and remain at home (what a home!) if possible. I mentioned this, and my desire to obtain needlework. Aunt Betsy shook her head. She said there were hundreds of needlewomen starving, however she would go with me to the shops and we would try.

"If I cannot obtain work of that kind, Aunt Betsy," I said, "I will go out and labor as you do."

"With those little, delicate hands?" said Aunt Betsy. "Nobody would think you worth hiring that looked at them; and besides, they wouldn't serve you for such work as mine. You must do something else."

My grand-father took one of my hands in his as Aunt Betsy spoke, and stroked it fondly. "My poor, poor child!" he said, "I hoped to have done better for you. You believe I always wished to do the best, don't you?"

"Don't speak in that way, grand-father," I said, throwing my arms round his neck, "you'll break my heart!"

"Come, we mustn't have any breaking of hearts," said Aunt Betsy. "There's plenty beside us in trouble, and we must do as they do,—make the best of it. I promised Jem that you should come and see him, Margaret."

"Yes, poor fellow!" said my grand-father, "you must go and see him. We must not forget them that are in affliction. I'll put my hat on, and we'll walk there together, now."

It was an evening in September, and the day-light was just going out. In the dingy court where we lived, with its tall, crowded houses, it was dark enough. Offensive sights and smells, and language such as I had never heard anywhere before, disgusted me, and made me shrink into myself as I passed. No wonder at the world setting its face against poverty, if these were its natural products—dirt, and squalor, and ugliness, and depravity. Was there no remedy for all this? No wonder that these loathsome objects were not considered to form a part of the agreeable company destined to make up the assembly in heaven!

As we were passing out of the court my grand-father stumbled against something, and we drew back. A dirty-looking man with a short pipe in his mouth, drew up and

kicked with his foot at the obstruction, which proved to be a woman lying at full length upon the ground.

"Now Molly," said the man, you just get up, and don't be a-blocking up the road this ways."

The woman groaned.

"I wish I was in the churchyard grave," she said.

"Is she ill?" asked my grand-father.

"Only got a drop too much," said the man.

"You're a big liar!" screamed the woman. "What's left me but the drink to fly to?—an' I can't get it. Holy mother! how they forget me up yonder, an' I so wantin' to die!"

"God help you!" said my grand-father; "do you feel fit to die, and go into the presence of your God?"

"Is it me?" said the woman; "Wouldn't I be thankful to get anywhere out of this? Don't I wish I'd be a corpse this blessed minit?"

"Are you a Roman Catholic?"

"I'm that same, blessed be God."

"Is there no one to look after this poor creature?" said my grand-father, addressing the man.

"The pollis 'll be looking arter her, if she don't take herself off," said the man. "Lord bless you, it's all a sham what she says; she only talks in that way when she's drunk."

"Don't believe that black heretic!" screamed the woman; "the curse of Saint Patrick light on him!"

It was impossible to pass the narrow entry without stepping over the woman, and we drew back, shocked and bewildered.

"Them Irish," said the man, "is the only ones about us as talks about religion, an' it don't seem to do 'em much good: they can curse the heretics. It's a queer start, is religion. Now you just let the gentlefolks pass. Here, Bill, lend us a hand."

Bill, who swore awfully, assisted the other to drag the woman out of the way. The language of the three, and the woman's screams, completely horrified me. What a peaceful home we had quitted for these scenes of turmoil and deep shame!

I felt my grand-father's arm tremble upon mine. I imagined all that was passing in his mind,—the distress that such a scene of itself would occasion him; the anguish he would feel, knowing that he might not be able to shut out from me many like exhibitions of depravity. I spoke to him of other matters,—of Mr. Chaundy, whom he had seen a few days before his death, when he had spoken of me with much interest.

"Mr. Chaundy knew the world better than I do." said my grand-father; "he told me months ago that Mrs. Wilton would serve you as she did, and he wished me to speak to her again; but I had better hopes. Well, well."

We stood before Jem's squalid cellar. It was under a marine-store shop, and we descended to it by three dirty steps. My grand-father knocked at the door, and opened it just as a very forlorn-looking woman, fluttering in rags, came forward from the interior.

"He's there, poor creeter," said the woman, pointing on our inquiry to where Jem lay, huddled up on a heap of straw. "I've just stepped in to clean up a bit; for he's a'most lost, an' nobody to look arter him."

A thought struck me at the moment. Does He who is no respecter of persons dive into these dens of filth and squalor in search of gems of great price, and find them?—hearts like this woman's, for instance, in the right place? It was only a passing idea that heaven would be more desirable if the company were thus select.

"It is very good of you to look after him a little," said my grand-father.

"I don't know about that," said the woman. "It comes nat'ral to us poor folks to help one another. God help us, if it warn't so. I'll step in again, Jem, presently; an' now you jist get up an' be talked to."

And with a delicacy of feeling that showed in her as well as it would have done in a duchess, the forlorn creature walked out.

"Now, Jem," said my grand-father, "how are you? Look up and speak to us;—here's my grand-daughter come to see you."

"Speak to me, Jem, for old times' sake. I have not seen you so long," I said.

"Them's jist the words he spoke to me that blessed mornin' afore he died," said Jem, raising his head. "'Jem,' says he, 'I've not seen that young gal as they're makin' a slave on yonder for a long while. I'd give a good deal, Jem,' he said, 'if I could help her afore I die.' O Lord, he did!" And Jem sank down and buried his head in the straw again.

I was about to speak to him further, but a choking sensation in my throat stopped me. My thoughts wandered back to that poor prisoner who had thought of me in his dying hours, and the tears sprang to my eyes, for I felt that I had lost one friend whose place might not be supplied readily.

"We must consider, Jem," said my grand-father, after a short pause, "that what we regret so much may be for our friend's benefit. He may have exchanged an earthly prison for a heavenly habitation. Let us not be selfish; I think, —I hope,—we have reason to rejoice."

"O Lord! if they had only made a bishop on him!" said Jem, in a passionate burst of grief; "If they'd only a put him in a palace as I wasn't let come anear: I should a seen him somewhere, but now I shall never see him nowhere—never; never! never!"

"In heaven, Jem," said my grand-father, placing his hand on Jem's arm, for he sat on a low stool at his side; "in heaven!"

There was silence again. I looked round the wretched place in which I sat, the floor of which appeared to be bare earth. There were two ricketty stools, higher than that on which my grand-father was seated; a block of wood, that seemed to serve for a table; a bundle of rags in one corner and Jem's truck in another; a few cracked mugs and plates on a shelf; a tumble-down fireplace, with a piece of rusty bent iron for a fender,—nothing more, except a small candle guttering over a bottle. It was a sublime thought, that of this poor creature being translated from such a place to heaven!

And why not? O God!—O Earth! the defiled and the undefiled! how my spirit wavered between them! I felt

the power of the world weakening, and my old faith coming back to me in scenes like these, that afforded me glimpses of a final and glorious retribution. I could annihilate the dark gulf between, over which I also was called upon to pass.

"Jem, look up," said my grand-father; "this is sinful; it is very weak and foolish too; look up, and be a man, and trust in God. You used to say you found a little life amongst us yonder."

"So I did, and so I do," said Jem, raising his head again. "Didn't that blessed creeter say to me, 'Jem, don't lose sight on 'em; help 'em if you can!' Didn't he? Lor bless you, I know!"

"Well, you *shall* help us. You see, we shall look upon you as a sort of legacy from our old friend, and we shan't be able to get on without you. Then we can talk together about him, Jem."

"Yes, I see," said Jem, setting up and rubbing his hands together, slowly. "That's what he said to me;—'You'll often talk about me, Jem; you an' them,' says he. O Lord! if I could only tell you all he said!"

By degrees we brought Jem into a quieter and more resigned state between us, and when we arose to go he got up too, and said in his natural manner: "I must go 'an see if there's any coal wantin' yonder;" and thinking it would help to rouse him, my grand-father allowed him to accompany us.

I had thought so little about Mrs. Bontoft that I did not produce her card or mention her request till the following day. My grand-father thought it was quite right to call upon her, and on Wednesday morning we set out together.

We had not apprised Jem of our journey, knowing that he would insist upon showing the way, and so neglecting his own affairs. We made inquiries about the situation of St. John's Wood, and were advised to take an omnibus as far as Upper Baker Street, in the New Road, which we did. We then inquired our way, and found it pretty readily; and suddenly there came to us the welcome breath of a purer air, and we had a glimpse of green fields, and the houses, surrounded by their gardens, seeemed perfect elysiums.

We found "Laurel Grove" at last, and a beautiful place it was. The house and grounds were inlosed by a high wall, and there was a lodge at the gate. I left my grandfather walking about, and approached the gate and rang the bell. A woman admitted me, and told me to go on to the house, which was approached by a fragrant shrubbery. At the house a footman opened the door, and upon learning my errand, told me to walk forward. He led me into a very luxurious drawing-room whose windows opened upon a lawn. Here was seated Mrs. Bontoft and two other ladies; and a stout, elderly gentleman in a showy dressing-gown stood with his back to the fire.

"Oh, I'm so glad you've come!" said Mrs. Bontoft; "sit here by me, I want to talk to you. So you've left Mrs. Wilton?"

I said I had.

"Now, if you won't think me too inquisitive, I should like to know what salary she gave you."

"I had no salary."

"There! I always said so!" exclaimed Mrs. Bontoft, clapping her hands. "Oh, the shabby woman! And she did not tell you till the last thing, that you were to have nothing?"

"I certainly expected some salary though none had been specified; and I was surprised when she told me that she thought I had understood that I was not to receive any from the first."

There was a chorus of exclamations from the ladies about Mrs. Wilton's shabbiness. The gentleman stood with his hands behind him, smiling blandly, but saying nothing.

"I always hated that Mrs. Wilton for her mean ways," said Mrs. Bontoft. "Nobody knows what I've endured from her. I cannot call my carriage my own, and when she comes to the house there's no getting rid of her. An ugly, tiresome old thing! Now I shall take this young person's part, and have a quarrel with her. I quite admired your spirit, Miss Marples, in acting as you did at the meeting: it was capital!"

And the two ladies said it was capital, and talked a great deal about it, and the gentleman chuckled with suppressed

laughter; and I found to my surprise that my exhibition of an empty hand had been construed into a satire on Mrs. Wilton's meanness. It seemed to strike all present as something very piquant and clever, and as there was no escaping the applause showered upon me, I bore it as well as I could.

"Now, Miss Marples," said Mrs. Bontoft, when she seemed at length to have talked and laughed herself out of breath, "I am in want of a sort of companion, and I think you will suit me. My husband here, Mr. Bontoft, likes to see young and pretty faces about him, so you will suit *him*. (Here the gentleman on the hearthrug chuckled again, and swayed backwards and forwards on his feet.) I shall not think of engaging you without a salary, shall I, Poppy?"

"What's the use?" exclaimed Mr. Bontoft, the individual appealed to, lifting his right leg and poising it in the air. I thought this brief sentence promised very unfavorably, and my eyes had just dropped from his face to the floor when, "What's the use?" repeated in a louder key caused me to look up again. The gentleman now stood upon his right leg and held the left in the air, and in a few seconds he strode hastily across the floor, saying quite hurriedly:—What's the use of having money if you don't make yourselves happy?"

This was a peculiarity of Mr. Bontoft's, as I found afterwards.

"After the heavy task-work you have been used to," said Mrs. Bontoft,—"teaching, making, mending, and doing heaven knows what, at Mrs. Wilton's, you will have an easy time with me. I shall give you twenty-five pounds a year; and as she must have put you very much about by making you work for nothing, I will pay you a quarter in advance. Poppy, give me a five-pound note."

Poppy put his finger and thumb in his waist-coat pocket and drew forth what appeared to me several pieces of dirty paper.

"What's the use," he said, throwing them before Mrs. Bontoft and raising his right leg; "what's the use," he continued, lifting the other, "what's the use of having money if you don't make yourselves happy?"

"Seeing Mrs. Bontoft really about giving me the quarter's salary in advance, I roused myself to speak, for though I had no objection to this abrupt mode of engaging me, and the money was very tempting, I did not feel quite sure about my qualifications for the place."

"You are very kind," I said, "and I would gladly accept your offer, if I could feel more assured that I should be able to give satisfaction. If I understood better what duties were required of me——"

"Oh, you are quite competent to anything I shall impose upon you," said Mrs. Bontoft, interrupting me. "You speak French charmingly. I know you play well; you can read correctly. If I want to make a milliner and dressmaker of you," she continued, laughing, "I know you will not be at fault *there*. Come, it's a settled thing; I've quite set my mind on it. When do you think you can come to us?"

I said I should like to have a few days to prepare myself.

"Then suppose we say next Monday?"

The day suited me, and it was agreed upon.

"Now make yourself quite happy," said Mr. Bontoft, approaching the table. "Take a glass of wine and a biscuit," and he handed me both.

"Ah, you will find a difference betwixt being here and at Mrs. Wilton's," said one of the ladies. "Both Mr. and Mrs. Bontoft *must* make everybody comfortable about them."

"What's the use," commenced Mr. Bontoft, and he finished his speech in the usual way.

"It isn't every one that makes so wise a use of their money, more's the pity, said the other lady.

Mrs. Bontoft placed the money in my hand, but I felt a hesitation about taking it. I dreaded nothing so much as being asked to give my address, yet I could not, for the life of me, help saying—

"I am almost entirely a stranger to you, madam; you do not even know where I live."

"Oh, I am entirely satisfied about that," said Mrs. Bontoft; "I know more than you imagine. I know that if you had had parents to protect you, or if your grand-

father had not been poor, Mrs. Wilton would not have taken the advantage she did; that makes it the more shameful. You will not find *me* taking such advantage. Make yourself quite easy, Miss Marples. We shall expect you on the Monday, and now, good morning."

"Don't ring the bell," said Mr. Bontoft; "come with me, my dear, and I'll show you through the garden."

I took leave of the ladies, who were all smiles and politeness, and followed him through a glass door out upon the lawn.

"Pretty place, aint it? he said, looking round him, and seeming to me in a state of intense enjoyment of the present.

"It is very beautiful, indeed," I said.

"You like beautiful things, eh? so do I. I've money, and I like to enjoy myself. We've flowers, you see, nearly all the year round. Are you fond of flowers?"

"Yes, very."

He plucked a rose, and presented it to me.

"'The last rose of summer,'" he said; "sweets to the sweet," bowing very politely. "I hope we shall be a happy little company when you come; nothing like enjoying ourselves whilst we can. Good morning."

The woman who had admitted me stood at the lodge door; she came forward and opened the gate, and I passed out. I rejoined my grand-father immediately, and had to give an account of the interview while its details were yet fresh upon me. I managed this so as to leave a more favorable impression on his mind than I had myself received, though I omitted much that, perhaps, ought to have gratified me. The bare facts of having been engaged at once, and cared for so thoughtfully, and trusted so implicitly, told well; but much of what I had seen and heard, the very excess of kindness and politeness, inspired me with distrust. It seemed to me that, dislike of Mrs. Wilton, and a desire to be rid of her, perhaps to gratify a little vanity by the display of strong contrasts, rather than any real interest in myself, had led to my good fortune. Then I could not help shrinking from these people who avowedly enjoyed life so much, and evidently prided themselves on the power of obtaining the good things of this world, and who exacted the

obedience that was for their especial gratification so confidently, though with a show of kindness. I was rather an odd subject to contribute to the already abundant enjoyment of fortune's favorites; and I could only expect to flourish on the uncertain tenure of a caprice likely to be brief in proportion to its violence.

However, an unsubstantial good might be preferable to the hard, coarse reality of evil; and certainly, whatever her motive, or whatever the end might be, Mrs. Bontoft had conferred a present benefit upon me. I thought I could perform wonders with the salary she offered me, for, good arithmetician as I was, I was too little experienced in the spending of money to know how far a certain sum would go in providing the necessaries of life. After a few days, however, during which I made some addition to my wardrobe, it became clear to me that in order to dress well, which I might more than ever be required to do, the twenty-five pounds might easily be spent upon myself, especially if I had my washing to pay for; and, in the course of my reflections, I found that I had again made a bargain without any clear understanding of the terms. These discoveries filled me with dismay, for the mere providing for myself was a secondary matter to me. I wished to be near my grand-father; I had determined not to leave him again unless I was allowed to minister to his wants; and I was angry with myself for having been so readily hurried into an engagement that, however well it promised for me, offered no chance of my helping others. I could not calmly contemplate a life of bodily ease and mental torture; I knew that I should not thrive upon luxuries with this ever-present thought of the hard and scanty fare provided for those I loved, if indeed they got that;—this was not what I had wanted, and the thoughts of my heart became yet more bitter;—it was not much I asked from God or from the world, and it seemed hard that the apparently fairest offer I had yet met with should only promise to be productive of misery.

It was an aggravation of my trouble to see what confidence and high hope my account of these people had inspired in my grand-father. He attributed to true Christian

feeling what I regarded as an eccentric ebullition of selfishness, and his ready trust in human goodness, while it excited my pity, weakened his influence over me still more; making me feel myself the protector rather than the protected, the teacher rather than the taught. For how much I had learned during my brief intercourse with the world, that it would have been hard for him to comprehend,—still harder to believe,—and how rapidly in that world had faded away the lessons he taught me in my solitude! Had I yet met with any whose actions and motives, like his, seemed to be governed solely by the precepts of Christ?

These contradictory teachings and experiences wearied me in the midst of other distracting cares and thoughts.—The burden of a mortal life seemed enough to struggle and provide for, with every man's hand against me; and I felt that if I, too, did not become a self-seeker, I could only make up my mind to let these Christian people crush me down altogether.

I saw a good deal of Jem during the few days I was at home. God knows how he lived: he said it kept him alive to talk about Mr. Chaundy. That gentleman's few possessions, such as his clothes and books, had been seized in prison for a debt contracted there, and Jem had no relic of him except a lock of hair, which he kept about his person. A rich relation, who had neglected Mr. Chaundy in life, came forward to bury him, and except that he was missed by us and Jem, he seemed to have left no void in the world. His fate affected me very much, as an illustration of individual nothingness. After a few years of suffering so also should we pass away, only more obscurely, and leaving fewer traces of a previous existence behind us. I learned from my aunt that our affairs were desperate enough, the little my grandfather brought with him being exhausted: but she spoke cheeringly of being able to maintain both by her own labor if she could get constant work. I could only resolve to expend as little of my salary as possible on myself; but when the Monday morning arrived I set out for "Laurel Grove" with a heavy heart.

Mr. Bontoft's was a model establishment for this world.—Nothing offensive to the ear or eye was allowed to come

near it. The servants were all young and comely; the contrivances for ease and pleasure were complete; the furniture and decorations, the eating and drinking, the constant plans for amusement, and the daily habits of both master and mistress, all displayed a craving for luxuriousness. It was shown in the richly carpeted, and curtained, and cushioned pew at Marylebone Church, where I had the honor of offering up my prayers in the company of Mr. and Mrs. Bontoft; of handling bibles and prayer-books clasped and rivetted with gold and blazoned with the Bontoft arms. I could not complain of my treatment any way, because, as the lady had said, Mr. and Mrs. Bontoft *must* have everybody comfortable about them. And it was not a bad idea either, that of the general depending upon individual comfort; and the plan worked well at Laurel Grove, where every one looked happy and satisfied, and where all seemed alike eager to enjoy the good things provided for them. It seemed almost sinful to bring a murmuring heart into such a place. I could not, for some time, help wondering what Mrs. Bontoft wanted with me, as she kept a maid, and required few services from me herself. Days passed on, and I did literally nothing, except read the papers to Mr. Bontoft, or help him to garden, or play till he fell asleep, whilst Mrs. Bontoft was out visiting. I learned that he was a retired merchant, immensely rich, who having no children or near relations, determined to have out of the world his money's worth of satisfaction for himself. And a happy man he was, altogether, because he could not believe that there was such a thing as real misery in the world. If people liked to work, he said, (and he had himself worked successfully the greater part of his life), there was plenty to do; if they liked to be idle, society provided the work-house for them.

"Anything so that you'll make yourselves happy," said Mr. Bontoft, apostrophising the word generally. Please yourselves, and we shall get on capitally."

It was true that accidents would occur in the best regulated world, but Mr. Bontoft subscribed to hospitals, dispensaries, and other public charities; and having performed his own part of duty so far, he had a comfortable assurance of all the ills of life being well provided for. Nothing could be kinder than Mr.

Bontoft's manner in his household; he had pet names for nearly every one. His wife was "moonface," I was "the little fawn," the coachman was "the white bear," and a smart housemaid "the mouse." He liked, too, to include others in all his schemes for self-gratification. He would ask me for instance, if there was anything I should particularly like for dinner or lunch; but though I was aware that a gastronomic idea would not have been thrown away upon him, I could make nothing of it. I always sat at table with themselves, and never was excluded when they had company. Sometimes I went out in the carriage with both of them, more frequently with Mrs. Bontoft alone, until she had exhibited me amongst all her acquaintances, and repeated, till I was sick of hearing it, the story of my ill-usage at Mrs. Wilton's.

The throng of visitors at Laurel Grove made much of me as a favorite, but I only shared their caresses with Mrs. Bontoft's French poodle. In many asides I was told what a happy creature I ought to consider myself in the possession of such kind friends. To be sure, Mr. and Mrs. Bontoft were very discriminating; no doubt I was deserving of their patronage. I was certainly handsome and accomplished, and gave every promise of being a comfort and a credit to my benefactors. And why was I unhappy, even apart from the thoughts of home? All this was not to my taste. I could have gloried in the hardest fare and the rudest accommodation, with independence. Here I had not the satisfaction of feeling that I was earning my daily bread. I felt, in fact, that I had been engaged for the double purpose of displaying an ostentatious liberality, and getting rid of Mrs. Wilton. How long would these people, so accustomed to self-gratification, bear with me if their humor changed?

Then there was no depth in the feeling about me, kind as it seemed. These people, so lavish of their favors, would have been horrified if I had spoken of Aunt Betsy's drudgery and my grand-father's distress, and my own wish to help them as much as possible. And amidst all this generosity and profusion, there seemed no chance of helping them. A heap of drapery and millinery goods arrived one

morning for Mrs. Bontoft's inspection, and from them she selected two dresses and some other articles for myself.

"We must have you nicely dressed," she said, "and you need not mind paying for them now. I will keep an account."

Besides knowing that I really stood in no need of these things—that I had plenty of clothing suited to my station—I had the additional mortification of being compelled to wear a costume offensive to me, on account of its gaudy coloring, and likely to entail further expense, because I had nothing to match with it. Aunt Betsy had excellent taste in dress; she could make the commonest and plainest material look genteel and becoming; and, perhaps, from, her I inherited my liking for quietness in attire. It was a real trouble to me to be dressed up like a doll, especially as it was to be at my own expense. I remembered hearing Uncle Stephen say that he could guess at the temper of a woman's mind by the way in which she dressed herself at different periods of her life. What was to be said of those who, like myself, acted under coercion? Fashion, the most arbitrary of all tyrants, would drag along with it the timid and the sensitive, who would shrink from any appearance of singularity; as for me, I was no better than Mrs. Bontoft's French poodle, that submitted to a beautifying process every morning.

With all his money and skill in making the most of it, Mr. Bontoft could not have everything his own way. He was subject to frequent attacks of gout, that confined him to the house; and at such times I found enough to do, as he required a deal of waiting upon; and the task of amusing him fell entirely upon myself. Mrs. Bontoft visited and attended parties as usual, and I began to perceive that I was not quite so useless as I had supposed myself to be.

Autumn passed away, and the winter months set in, and there were great preparations for the Christmas festivities. I was one morning seated in the drawing-room with Mr. Bontoft during his wife's absence on a visiting expedition. He had just recovered from an attack, and was, as usual, anxious to make up for lost time; and it was wonderful how many little contrivances he had for self-enjoyment. I

was reading to him in a new comic annual, and he laughed heartily.

"I say, Little Fawn," he exclaimed, suddenly, "give me a glass of wine. Moonface won't be home to lunch, and we must enjoy ourselves as well as we can. What shall we have?"

I suggested several dishes that I knew he was partial to.

"Cooky shall warm us that hare soup; just the thing for this raw day. Skip into the kitchen, like a little fawn as you are, and tell her."

I went to the kitchen and delivered the message. On my return I found Mr. Bontoft, standing where I left him, on the hearth-rug, with his back to the fire; but his usually smiling face wore a wrathful expression; he seemed, indeed, in too great a rage to speak, and pointed with his hand to one of the windows. There, in the midst of the hoar-frost that hardened the ground, and whitened over the bare branches and the evergreens, exposed to the biting blast and the inclement sky, stood a miserably clad woman and two half-naked children, all shivering, and all casting a mute, appealing look upon Mr. Bontoft, as he luxuriated over the fire.

"Isn't this too bad?" he exclaimed, in a state of excitement. "Isn't it dreadful? Anything like this happening at Laurel Grove! Good God!"

I thought his horror was occasioned by the contemplation of so much misery, and that, if only for his own comfort, he would be compelled to give something.

"Shall I," I commenced—I was about to say, "shall I go out and speak to them;" but he interrupted me hastily.

"Of course,—to be sure,—directly. Tell John to take a horsewhip to them. Bless my life," he continued, ringing the bell violently, "what an infliction this is? what can be the meaning of it?"

The meaning seemed pretty clear to me; but what he had said confused me, and I stood, not knowing what to do, when John entered.

"What are you all about?" said Mr. Bontoft, again pointing to the window; "what do I maintain a lodge for? Look there, sir!"

"Lor' a marcy!" said John, in evident dismay, "how did they come anear?"

He dis ppeared like a shot, and I soon saw him outside, driving the poor creatures before him.

"Give me another glass of wine," said Mr. Bontoft; "this is enough to spoil a man's appetite for a month! You see how well-disposed I am to be comfortable myself and to make everybody about me the same; but what's to be done where other people neglect their duty? I assure you, the man at the lodge and his wife had strict orders from the first, not to admit anything of that kind. I shall be sorry to be severe, but I must look after them."

Mr. Bontoft seated himself in an arm-chair, and sipped his wine. I bent over the comic book and thought of the misery that had just been driven from this abode of luxurious plenty. I wondered if I could be more of a slave than I was, compelled to hide every feeling, and fashion my very looks, so that they might not give offence to my employers. What was I learning from these Christians, to whose teaching my grand-father resigned me without a fear, after tearing me from the companionship of Uncle Stephen?"

"What's the use," exclaimed Mr. Bontoft; for he was on his legs again, and he finished his speech in the usual way, the last word bringing him to my side.

"I say," he said, bending over me, "have you got a sweetheart?"

"No, sir."

"Have you never had one?"

"No, sir."

"What a shame! How do you like Captain Phipps?"

"Not much, sir."

"Not much; that means a great deal in the mouth of a young lady. Well, I have it from Walker, that Captain Phipps admires you vastly."

"I am sorry to hear it, sir; but you have surely been misinformed."

"Ha! Ha! what odd ways women have of beating about the bush! Come, now, you can't help being gratified by the admiration of Captain Phipps; everybody admires him. I have an inclination to help you up in the world, and I

don't know if this isn't an opening ; I'll talk to Moonface about it."

I had a decided aversion to Captain Phipps, who seemed to come to the house whenever he liked. He always addressed me with the unrestrained familiarity that, in a young man, and a superior, was as impertinent as anything could well be. I begged that Mr. Bontoft would not think of him in connexion with myself.

"Oh, say no more about it," said Mr. Bontoft; "I know! Bless you, I never met with a young girl that didn't say exactly the reverse of what she meant in a love affair in my life. Now, I won't hear another word: let's have lunch."

From what I had seen of young girls, I could believe that what Mr. Bontoft said was true. Affectation and insincerity were not incompatible with boldness; and for these sins of my sex I must expect to suffer. Perhaps there was a better way than my own of getting out of this dilemma; but who was to teach it me? I began to have an idea that another storm was preparing for me.

In the first place, Mrs. Bontoft, young and gay, and showily handsome, was herself accustomed to receive the homage of Captain Phipps. Then nothing could be more monstrous than the idea of his entertaining any serious thought of me. Mr. Bontoft's foolish meddling might set his wife against me, or convert me into a lauging-stock, for I had seen enough of the world's aptitude at twisting the truth to believe it quite possible that the idea of the man's admiration might eventually be discovered to have originated with myself. Oh, my God, forgive me, how I hated these people! How, above all others, I loathed that Captain Phipps, who, under his easy assurance possessed—I was sure of it—all the cold-blooded villany and disdainful pride of Colonel Leigh: why was I so beset—not with temptations, but with horrors, that made life a burden to me, go where I would?

Mr. Bontoft was as good as his word, and talked to Moonface about it that day at dinner.

"Bless me!" she said, turning and looking me full in the face, "this *is* news! Whatever has the Captain been saying to you?"

I assured her that the Captain had said nothing particular to me; that Mr. Bontoft's communication had surprised me equally with herself.

"O Poppy," she said, "you must act with more discretion! Only think of offending Captain Phipps by letting him see you entertained such a notion,—so absurd! And I trust, Miss Marples, you will give no encouragement to young men of his rank in my house: you must be aware that it would lead to nothing creditable."

I assured her that nothing would be further from my thoughts than giving such encouragement, if I had the opportunity, and I thanked her for placing the subject in a right light before Mr. Bontoft. I might further have assured her, that if Captain Phipps could so far forget himself and my poverty and insignificance as to make me an offer of his hand, I should certainly refuse it at once, for many reasons independent of my utter contempt for himself. Several months before, I had formed a resolution to pass through the world alone; I would not bring to any one the dower of my own disgrace; I would not perpetuate it; I had sufficient pride to sustain me through a solitary life, and this would not allow me to fail in self-respect. I lifted my head high above these people by whom I was despised; I exulted in the knowledge that they could not bring me down to their own level.

From this day I was made painfully aware that Mrs. Bontoft regarded me with jealous dislike. In company she took great pains to make others as well as myself aware of my dependent state and obscure origin, expatiating not very delicately on her own generosity in rescuing me from destitution, and ostentatiously promising her protection so long as I deserved it. This led to further congratulations from the visitors, flattering to Mrs. Bontoft, but charged with the bitterness of the fruit of the tree of knowledge to myself.

In the midst of all this, the conviction was forced upon me that Captain Phipps was seriously inclined to make himself more hateful, and to prove a further annoyance to me. Supposing that his approaches to myself were in conformity with established custom between a superior and inferior

where nothing "serious" was meant, it was sufficiently astonishing to an unsophisticated woman how all the misery and shame that desolates so many homes could be brought about. Astonishing that the natural pride, and delicacy, and resentment of womanhood did not rise up at once, and with indomitable power put down the insolent pretension, and base purpose, and inordinate vanity, and hold up to a scorn that should be everlasting, the vileness that can trample upon all that should be sacred, and make a boast of the achievement. If I were here doubly armed, I did not escape without my share of suffering. With Mrs. Bontoft's eyes always upon me, I had to repel the Captain's advances as well as I could, and he contrived to make this a difficult matter. If our eyes chanced to meet, he would smile in a significant manner, as if there were some secret intelligence between us; if I were told to play, he fastened himself at my side; turning over the leaves of the music-book, whispering extravagant commendations, and, occasionally pressing his foot upon mine, staring me impudently in the face all the time. When we met or parted, he would extend his hand where he knew I could not well refuse mine, and squeeze my fingers till the blood retreated. If any delicately nurtured and proud beauty, whose position places her out of the reach of such indignity, should think lightly of the delicacy that could submit to all this, I can only say, that never did indignation burn more fiercely in any soul than it did in mine while yet I knew not how to give vent to it. I could not tell how Mrs. Bontoft might receive a complaint of these freedoms, and the man had said nothing positively to call for interference. There were plenty ready to stand up in his defence; and I shrank from the idea of incurring a charge of having falsely interpreted liberties that from him to me might be considered too trifling for notice.

And that vast difference between him and me—my God! in what did it consist? Through many long and sleepless nights I wandered about my room, asking of heaven or earth an answer to this question. To what purpose was I endowed with a reasonable sense of what was right and wrong, if circumstances were continually to keep me down, and choke my utterance, and compel my acquiescence

in what I knew to be evil? And if these outbursts of feeling ended as they began, in a dogged sense of my own helplessness, they left behind them a lurking belief that the fierce storm gathering in my soul would some day scatter the humiliating restraints of my position, and set me free.

No matter about the terms of the freedom, I thought then. God help me! I had not yet become familiar with starvation, or with the tender mercies of parish dignitaries. I was yet a novice in this old world's ways for grinding souls into the dust.

In one respect it was well for me that I had sufficient causes of dissatisfaction. I was in danger of being infected by the habits of uncontrolled indulgence, and the luxurious ease about me: I had a craving desire for the beautiful, and a life of elegant leisure suited me very well. I should have been inclined to overrate the privilege of lying down in pleasant places, and to leave them with regret if I had not been constantly reminded that I was an intruder, and admonished sternly on the folly of cultivating tastes that could only dissatisfy me further with the uncertainties and the dependencies to which I was born. I was further protected from besetting weakness by a restlessness of spirit for which a life of ease and indulgence offered no adequate scope; and at all times I seemed to hold a mysterious communication with the future, as if a spiritually visible hand was beckoning me onward, and compelling obedience to its movements. This feeling of always waiting for something that must be arrived at, whether I desired it or not, never left me in the darkest days of my trial; and if it did not supply me with an incentive to live on, it did the next best thing,—of proving that my time was not yet come to lie down and die.

Another weary month passed on, and one morning, late in January, I was left alone, Mr. and Mrs. Bontoft having gone out together. I was in a despondent mood, for Aunt Betsy's letters had of late assumed a sadder tone (my grandfather was now altogether incapable of writing;) and knowing her propensity for making the best of everything, my imagination readily supplied what she had left unsaid. I began to loathe the luxury by which I was surrounded, the

leisure that was filled up with bitter thoughts. Conscience brought back to me the many hours during which I had indulged a selfish forgetfulness in the present: and I felt that I had committed a mistake when I last left my relations to bear their hard struggle alone. I thought of my grandfather, nearly blind, and left to himself all day, and of Aunt Betsy returning to him at night after a hard day of toil. I had now tried to make a living out of my acquirements during more than twelve months, and I found myself worse off than at the beginning. Worse, because my stock of clothes was diminishing, and I had literally not been able to save a penny. I felt that if I could obtain needlework, and remain at home with my grand-father, I should be at once happier and more useful: and this idea fastening itself upon me, I sat down to write to Aunt Betsy, explaining to her why my present mode of life was altogether profitless, and imploring leave to return home. I was so absorbed that I did not hear the drawing-room door open, nor was I aware of any one approaching until a hand was placed upon my shoulder, and I instinctively shrank away from it.

"I'm in luck to-day, upon my soul," said Captain Phipps, seating himself beside me on the sofa. "You bewitching little cweater! how coolly you have looked on, witnessing my agonies, when you must have known that I was dying to speak to you! Come, that twaddling old fellow and his fussy wife cannot overhear us, and you must listen to me or I shall go distwacted, positively."

I had risen up and moved my papers away. I stirred no farther than to the extreme end of the table. I, too, had something to say, and I was rather pleased than otherwise to have this opportunity of giving utterance to the scorn and indignation that seemed to ooze out of every pore in my body. I felt myself too well armed against this pigmy assailant to speak irritably.

"And what have you got to say that may not be uttered before your friends?" I asked. "What is it that you so confidently expect *me* to listen to? Do not let me disconcert you: speak on. There is no one to overhear us, as you say,—not even God; for who in these days believes in the existence of a God? Besides, you are a soldier, and ought

to be brave; and I am poor and dependent, and you need not fear me. You see I am quite ready to listen."

"Upon my soul you are a stwange girl," said Captain Phipps; "but I like a woman of spirit. I hate dolls. And you are quite right: let us come to the point at once; that's my way always. You know I adore you. I have told you so fifty times over without speaking. Now I'll tell you what I'll do for you. I'll dwive you down to Bwighton, four in hand, and you shall dwess as you like, and have jewelry, and hold your head above them all. Hang it! when I first saw you, I felt there was a what-d'ye-call-em—a sort of congeniality between us. Come now, be a complying angel. These people are making a slave of you. With me you shall have your own way, and live like a queen."

This was precisely the sort of experience that always fixed for the moment my wavering faith in God, and my own immortality. For I could not believe that there was nothing more than "earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust," betwixt me and this man, who shamed his own nature, if only as a clod of the valley; and I was forced to feel that the inward quivering of passion that did not move a muscle of my frame lifted me out of my materiality.

The breath of power that swept over me was cold to the mortal touch, as it had ever been. I stood rigidly erect before the man with a sensation of my blood turning to ice; my lips were cold as marble, and moved as heavily, though the words they uttered seemed to be produced by a force within me that struck them out of fire.

"I have heard you to my own shame," I said; "not to yours, because you must have been lost to all shame before you could so address yourself to one whom you believed to be poor and dependent, and without a free choice. There are no words to express the contempt and scorn in which I hold you. I loathe you and your offer alike. But you have made a mistake, and I must correct you. I am not so unprotected that I am compelled to endure your insolence from day to day. If you are not too shallow to comprehend what is plain enough, or too effeminate to grasp at stubborn realities, you may understand that I am even able to protect

myself. You have no right to be here, sir, in the absence of your friends, and I desire you to quit the room and the house."

The door was opened as I spoke, and Mr. and Mrs. Bontoft walked in.

"Bless my life!" exclaimed the latter, "who are *you* ordering out of the room and the house! Well, I declare, I expected something like this!"

"Why—why—why what's the matter, Phipps?" said Mr. Bontoft.

"Oh, I don't know," said Captain Phipps, lazily extending himself upon the sofa, and yawning. "The young lady has been working herself up into an extraordinary fit of heroics, and upon my soul I'm sorry you interrupted the fun. Mrs. Bontoft, if I did not know you had a chawming temper, I should wonder how you managed her."

"Miss Marples," said Mrs. Bontoft, turning upon me, sharply, "I insist upon your explaining yourself."

"I have nothing to explain," I said, "except that that man has insulted me, and I cannot remain in the same room with him."

"*That man!*" repeated Mrs. Bontoft; it might be that gentleman, I think, in your mouth."

I heard no more, for I walked out, and went up stairs to my bed-room. Mechanically I began packing up the few things lying about that belonged to myself. That uncontrollable impulse under which I had acted, whether right or not, told against me in this world; but it was enough that I did not regret it. It was however, a battle of the weak with the strong, and I knew that I should be discomfited. "Perhaps God is guiding me for the best, in spite of myself," I said. "At all events, it is well that I should return to my grand-father."

It was yet early in the day, and I remained many hours alone, no one coming near me.

Mrs. Bontoft's maid appeared at length, and brought me some tea.

"I hadn't any orders," she said, "but I thought you must be hungry. I'm so sorry you're going."

"It can't be helped," I said.

Sarah lingered in the room, and at length said:

"I think, miss, if you would speak to Captain Phipps he would make it all right again. He's a pleasant gentleman sometimes."

"I cannot do that, Sarah," I said. "You do not understand: say no more about it."

At a later hour I was ordered down stairs. I found Mr. and Mrs. Bontoft and Captain Phipps seated round a table covered with wines, cakes, and various kinds of confections. The Captain was holding a glass of wine to his eye when I entered, and he sipped it leisurely whilst I remained.

"I don't intend to have more words with you than are necessary," said Mrs. Bontoft, "but I think it due to Captain Phipps to let him see that no dependent in this house has our authority for acting impertinently. I don't want *you* to say anything: the Captain has given us his word of honor that his statement is correct, and I am really astonished at your giving yourself such airs. Some people cannot be indulged without forgetting themselves and taking liberties. The Captain has been kind enough to intercede for you, but keeping you here is out of the question."

"Oh dear, no, no!" said Mr. Bontoft; "let her go: we mustn't be made uncomfortable in this way. Now, Moonface, get rid of it and let us enjoy ourselves."

"I've little further to say," said Mrs. Bontoft, "except that as I have overpaid you already, you must not expect anything more. I suppose that you will not deny that I have paid you one quarter, and the things I have purchased for you amount to more than is due for the quarter upon which you have just entered. So, in fact, I am still giving you a quarter's salary in advance. This must serve in lieu of notice, which I really could not give with the prospect of being annoyed further."

"Oh dear, no!" said Mr. Bontoft; "get rid of nuisances at once."

"Then you will prepare yourself to go to-morrow morning," said Mrs. Bontoft.

I had stood still without speaking a word. To what purpose could I speak? I made an inclination, and was moving towards the door, when Captain Phipps called out:

"Um—aw—just wait a minute. When next you choose to go on stilts and use stwong expwessions, just stop to consider who you're talking about, will you?"

The knowledge that I could not make matters worse by saying anything, did not incline me to open my mouth. At the moment, I did not feel myself so much in the hands of these people as in the hands of God: and I was rather inclined to say to the Creator, "Why is this iniquity permitted?" than to the creature, "I defy you, I can still defend myself."

I know, what every Englishman and woman who may read this knows well, that no negro or quadroon in the worst Slave State of America is further removed from the pale of humanity, more really despised and down-trodden, than is poverty in this free and self-righteous land. In making use of me for her own gratification Mrs. Bontoft had not rated me above any other article necessary to her state; I had never received more personal consideration from her than I did at the moment of my abrupt dismissal; and Captain Phipps, though—possessing a mind of extra littleness—he took the trouble to rebuke me, cared no more for my estimate of his "word of honor" than he would have done if I had been a negro or a dog. And if people well to do in the world, people of money and position, will analyse their own feelings and take a retrospect of their own actions from day to day in connection with their readiness to stand by their own class and their inborn abhorrence of poverty in all shapes, they will at once acknowledge my experience to be nothing out of the way, though they may marvel at my assurance in attempting to bring anything so commonplace prominently forward.

I will say nothing about my feelings during that long night, because few would care for them, and those few may never read these pages. I had remaining, the little money I brought with me, and this enabled me to pay for the hackney coach that John ordered to the door the next morning. When I gave my address to the coachman—"Brook's Court, Clerkenwell,"—he regarded me with the insolent look that, in England, is called forth even from the poorest, by an admission or suspicion of mean circumstances.

"Brook's Court," he repeated; "I never heard on it. Is it anywheres near Clerkenwell Green?" I could not tell him, and after some grumbling he mounted the box, and I was driven away from that abode of elegance and social ease. I did not see either Mr. or Mrs. Bontoft, and I had the comfort of knowing that my departure would give great satisfaction to both these individuals to whose daily enjoyment of life I had proved a slight interruption. I did not seem to have been driven far when the coachman called out to know if I could direct him which way to turn, but I could not, and he got off the box grumbling, and went into a shop to make inquiries. He seemed to have obtained some clue, for he drove off again, and presently deposited me and my two boxes at the bottom of Brook's Court.

I can't leave them 'osses to carry that ere luggage," he said, as I paid him the fare. "There's plenty as 'll do it if you look about." And so saying he mounted to his seat and drove away.

It was a populous neighborhood, and plenty of people were passing to and fro, but I did not know whom to address. A fat, dissipated-looking woman of about forty, with a string of heavy beads round her neck, and no cap on, strolled down to the end of the court, and stood there with her arms folded.

"Are you in wants of a porter?" she said at length, addressing me.

"I want some one to carry these boxes," I said; "only a little way, to number nine up the court."

"Lauk! Do you live here?"

"My grand-father does."

"Oh, I knows; the old man as is ill. Wait a minute; I'll fetch a cove as 'll do the job if he aint too drunk."

The old man that was ill! My grand-father had been ill, then, and they had not told me. My heart beat thick and fast, and it seemed an age till the woman returned.

"Sam 'll be here presently," she said, on making her appearance, "an' him an' me can carry 'em between us."

I asked her to take charge of the boxes at once, and hurried up the court. I rushed into the wrong house, and was driven out by a hideous old woman, who called me a

"blazon young faggot." I cannot help it if I am compelled to record much that is horrible; I sat down with the intention of giving a faithful narrative of the past as it bore upon my feelings and my destiny.

It is a fact that one shock neutralises another. I found the right house, and walked upstairs quietly. I opened the door of our room, and saw my grand-father stretched upon a mattress on the floor, apparently fast asleep. There was a heaviness about the wan face and attenuated figure that might well be taken for that of death, and I gazed upon him till my heart seemed to stand still. Presently I heard a noise down stairs, and went out and closed the door gently, and waited till the woman and her companion came up with my boxes.

I told them to leave them on the landing, and asked what I had to pay.

"What you like to give," said the woman.

That indefinite mode of compensation is never more tantalising than when you feel that you have little to bestow. I had no smaller coin than a shilling in my purse; and, as I held one irresolutely in my fingers, the woman called out, "that'll do," taking possession of it as she spoke.

"I go halves," said the man who was with her.

"You be blowed," said the woman; "I'll treat you to three pen'orth, an' that's more nor you deserve; just bundle down."

I waited till they were fairly gone, and then opened the door again. My grand-father was awake, and he uttered my name feebly, and I went to his side, and knelt down and kissed his forehead and his pale lips.

"And so they sent for you, my child," he said. "I told them not, and you see I am now getting well. Yet this surprise is pleasant, too."

I thought the pleasantness would be diminished when he understood that I was once more driven forth and penniless. It was painful to me to give this explanation, though just before I had considered the change for the best. However I spoke out at once.

"No one sent for me, dear grand-father, and I did not

know you were ill, or I should have been here before. Now I will not leave you again. You require a nurse, and I can work while I attend to you. I shall feel happier than I have been while away from you, grand-father."

"I am sorry for this," he said, looking at me wistfully. "If not quite happy, I had the satisfaction of knowing that you were well protected; that you were kept out of the way of the vicious, whose example shocks and withers the feelings if it cannot corrupt them. I had hoped to get out of this place before you returned to me."

Here was my grand-father, like the rest of the world, strong in his belief that nothing vicious or degrading could be found amongst respectable people. His simplicity was a species of weakness to which I felt compelled to minister, for what was the use of distressing him further with details of the iniquity in many forms by which my heart had been shocked and withered, if not corrupted.

I needed to give no further explanation of the abrupt termination of my engagement than was to be found in the natural dying away of the caprice that led to it. I was able to prove that it would have been impossible to save anything out of my salary, and that therefore my remaining would have proved to be no ultimate advantage even to myself. I was addressing myself to an invalid in the last stage of weakness, and I tried to speak as cheerfully and hopefully as possible. And it is astonishing how soon I began to feel as if I had never been absent from this home, sanctified by the light of affection. Presently Aunt Betsy came in with some medicine. If she, too, was surprised and troubled, she gave little expression to her feelings, and encouraged me in my hope of finding something to do at home.

I learned that my grand-father had been ill more than a month; during which time my aunt had been compelled to attend to him. How they had lived God knows, and I dreaded to ask. I missed nearly all of my grand-father's books, as well as several other things that used to lie about. I supposed that they had been sold to procure necessaries, and I did not shrink from looking these worst horrors in the face at once.

My grand-father dozed through half the day, and I sat consulting with Aunt Betsy. She acknowledged that our situation was bad enough; that, having herself been unable to work in consequence of my grand-father's illness, they had been compelled to dispose of the books, and such other things as could be best spared. The great difficulty was paying the rent—six shillings a week for that miserable place.

"I do hope that your coming home will turn out for the best," said Aunt Betsy. "Whilst your grand-father was at the worst, Jem was a great help to me; now he is getting better, and if you could procure a little needlework you could attend to him and work at the same time. There's two young girls occupying an attic in this house that get a living by working for the ready-made linen shops. That is," continued Aunt Betsy, feeling it necessary to modify her words, "they contrive to keep soul and body together. I'm an old woman, but I never met with anything like the suffering there is in this overgrown town, Margaret. These two sisters are orphans, quite alone in the world, and they tell me that, work as hard as they will, they can only earn one shilling a day, finding their own needles and thread! Well, you had better be doing this than nothing. If you like, you shall go up and see them; they are so lonely, poor things! they will be glad of a visit from you."

I felt quite eager to go to them; and as my grand-father slept, Aunt Betsy took me out, closing the door gently behind us. I followed her to the top landing, and she knocked at the door of the back attic. A low voice told us to come in.

CHAPTER VIII.

I BELIEVE my unexpected appearance disconcerted the two girls very much. I was well dressed, which made their own shabbiness more conspicuous; and, perhaps, experience had taught them to look for little sympathy from one of their own age and sex, whose position appeared to be above theirs.

"It's only my niece," said Aunt Betsy; "if you let us see that we disturb you, we shall go away directly."

"Oh, you don't disturb us at all," said the eldest of the girls, who had started up from a table at our entrance, her pale face flushing for an instant. "We have just been getting an early tea, and we are very busy, so you must excuse finding us in this state. Will you sit down, Miss?"

She dusted a chair, and placed it for me. The early tea, I suspected, included the day's dinner. The tea-pot stood on the hob, and on the table, (a small round one), were two cracked mugs, a basin containing some coarse sugar, part of a loaf of bread, some butter, and the remains of a herring.

"I assure you we had quite done," said the girl, in reply to something my aunt said. "Susan was just going to clear away, so don't go on that account. We have set ourselves a task, Mrs. Marples, but I don't know how we shall get on with it. We sat up all last night, and intend to do the same to-night; but Susan stands it better than I do, and I'm afraid I shall be falling asleep; it's a long time to keep awake, you know, and such tiresome work."

"And you won't find it a saving in the end," said Aunt Betsy. "Suppose it makes you both ill now?"

"I tell Susan so," said the girl, "but she has such a spirit! And then we really have need to try something extra. We shall see how we get on."

This elder sister interested me very much. I wished that she would look me full in the face, instead of glancing at me furtively, and dropping her eyes whenever they met mine. As I gazed at her I could not help thinking that if well dressed, even joyless and in ill-health as she evidently was, she would look better in every respect than any of the gay girls I had seen at Mrs. Brown's. She seemed to be about seventeen or eighteen years old, and without being handsome, her appearance altogether was pleasing. Her soft, bright brown hair was very neatly arranged, and a beautiful set of teeth and a well formed mouth rendered her smile, sad as it was, very fascinating. The other sister appeared to me quite a child, though I afterwards learned that she was nearly fourteen. Unlike the elder one, she was short and stout, altogether sturdy in appearance and manner, and our presence did not seem to disturb her at all as she busied herself about the room. She was not so pretty as her sister, being slightly marked with the small-pox, and I found that I had attracted her particular notice for some reason, as she rarely took her eyes off me.

"Well, Mary," said Aunt Betsy, "my niece wished to see you, and now I have introduced you to one another. I shall leave you together; for young people get on best by themselves. You must not make a stranger of her; for, thank God, I can feel that her heart is in the right place, or I shouldn't have brought her here. I'll take care of grand-father," she added, turning to me, "and you may stop as long as you like."

The rapid lifting and dropping again of Mary's heavy eyes seemed to betoken some fear of this arrangement; but Aunt Betsy was gone, and I, who had not yet spoken a word roused myself for an effort that should break through this embarrassment.

"You must not let me be an interruption," I said; "if you will allow me to help you, I shall feel quite pleased; indeed it will be conferring a favor upon me, for as I shall have

to earn my living in the same way, it is as well to begin practising at once."

Mary lifted her eyes from her work in evident astonishment.

"But you have been well educated," she said; "surely you have no need to turn to such drudgery as ours is."

"Mine has been heavier drudgery," I said; "because I never was so independent as you are; indeed, I have never earned anything that I could do as I liked with, and I should be far worse off than you are if I had not had a home to return to. Come, I have got a thimble; let me help you."

Mary still seemed to hesitate; but Susan came forward eagerly.

"Oh, yes, let her help us! You know how badly I want a new frock; and if we don't work hard, I can't get one. Look here, Miss Marples, you can be sewing that."

I took what was offered me, and commenced in earnest.

"You are very kind," said Mary. "That child has been spoilt. She was a great pet at home and I have got in the habit of humoring her. She is all that is left to me, too. But you surprise me with what you say about yourself. I have often wished that I had been well educated, that I might have done something better for Susan and myself."

"I have not found a good education of much use to me," I said, "in the way of earning a living. You may understand that, from what I say, I am quite in earnest about trying to get my living as you do."

"It is very grievous," said Mary, in her quiet manner. "There seems to be little that we poor women can turn to with advantage. That makes me so unhappy about Susan."

"And not about yourself?" I thought as I lifted my eyes to look at her. How old, experience seemed to have made her, young as she was!

"Sister always talks so odd!" said Susan; "as if we should be doing this all our lives! I mean to marry, and make my fortune."

Mary lifted her eyes to mine for an instant, and we inter-

changed a world of experience in the glance. We both pitied this child, who seemed doomed to a more than ordinary disappointment.

"I do admire your dress, Miss Marples," continued Susan, who was very chatty. "I was always so nicely dressed at home, wasn't I Mary? and now I'm quite ashamed to go out. People stare so when you're ill-dressed."

"For my part," said Mary, "I consider a shabby dress a sort of protection: nobody cares to look at you."

"Now, that's just like her," said Susan; "she would rather not be looked at: isn't that odd?"

I had never been so puzzled by a question. Though my sympathies went mainly with the elder sister, I felt sorry for this poor young thing, troubled about so small a matter as a decent dress. Not so small a matter either, when I came to consider; for I, who had never been so far reduced, could not help feeling how unpalatable such a final declension would be to myself.

"And so, by working hard," I said in reply, "you hope to get a new frock? Well, I will do my best to help you, and we shall surely manage it amongst us."

And whilst I said this, with an idea that, poor as we were, we might afford to patronize these friendless girls, (the idea of patronizing anybody was very agreeable to me), I brought into review before me sundry dresses that I had outgrown, and that would sell for very little, and that with very slight alteration might be made up for this child. And then I thought of the profusion at Mrs. Bontoft's, and wondered what became of the superfluities of the rich.

Whilst we were busily at work a very chubby-faced child, a boy of about eight years old, opened the door and peeped in, and seeing me, was about to retreat when Mary called out:

"Come in, James; here's a young lady that will be quite glad to see you. He is *such* a darling, Miss Marples!"

I had never seen much of children, and certainly I had never seen a child so beautiful as this one was. Standing for a moment, irresolute whether to advance or retreat, he gave me a full view of his very fair and handsome face; his noble head with its clustering curls of sunny hair; his large,

liquid blue eyes and pouting lips;—and making a sudden dash forward he flung himself headlong into Mary's lap, dragging her work out of her hands.

"I'm not going to stand this any longer," he said: "you all make such a pet of me, and it's nothing but nonsense. I mean to be a soldier."

"Oh, he's a brave boy!" said Mary, holding his head caressingly with both hands; "and you can't think how patriotic he is, Miss Marples."

"England," said the child, raising his round face, and holding out his chubby hand, and elevating his forefinger, "England shall never lie at the proud foot of a conquerer! Didn't we beat the French at Waterloo?"

"We did, love," said Mary, kissing him, and her whole heart seemed to be in the caress—"we did, and we always shall whilst we have such brave fellows as you are."

"Oh yes! it's all very well talking about brave fellows, and kissing me that way!" said the boy. "I'm not going to stand it, I tell you, so be quiet. Women are so silly!"

He glanced slyly at me out of the corners of his blue eyes as he spoke.

"Well, I never saw such a little Turk," said Susan.

The boy retreated to the end of the room, and stood against the wall with his hands behind him.

"When I'm a man," he said, I mean to march under the 'flag that braved a thousand years the battle and the breeze!' I shall be a soldier or a sailor; I don't know which yet. But I'll let the French see it's true what the song says: —

'Britannia needs no bulwarks,
No towers along the steep;
Her march is o'er the mountain wave,
Her home is on the deep.'

Nobody ever conquered *us*, did they Mary?"

"No, love."

"Now you were both saying last night, while reading the Bible, that fighting was sinful," said Susan.

"Now you know nothing about it," said the boy, and his baby lip curled with an expression of contempt. "We said it was sinful to quarrel, but not to defend ourselves. You would look very queer if the French came over some fine

day and burned all our houses and took us prisoners. We're not going to let them do that, I should think. I've been reading about Nelson, Mary; all about his funeral, you know. Don't you think Nelson went right to heaven?"

"I hope so," said Mary.

"He was so brave!" said the child. "But I should like to be buried as Sir John Moore was."

"Why?"

"I don't know, but I should," said the boy. "I'm always thinking of the dark night, and the silence, and the lantern gleaming, and the soldiers bending over him.

'No useless coffin confined his breast,
Nor in sheet nor in shroud we wound him;
But he lay like a warrior taking his rest,
With his martial cloak around him.'

Wasn't that grand?"

I thought there was a grandeur about the child himself as he stood with flashing eyes, his cheek paling and his lip quivering with emotion.

"He's a strange child," said Mary, lifting her eyes from her work. "He's such a knowledge of things, and he feels so. You should hear him read. James," she continued, speaking in a louder tone, "will you read for us to-day?"

"Yes, to be sure. What shall I read?"

"The History of Joseph."

"Nay," said the boy; "you know, Mary, I never read that well. I always feel a choking in my throat, and then I am obliged to stop, and Susan laughs at me. I'll read something else."

"The parable of the lost sheep, then"

"Now, Mistress Mary clary, quite contrary, you know that's worse still."

"Nay, dear, I like to hear you read that so much; do oblige me; and Miss Marples here wants to hear it."

"Do you?" said the child, turning to me sharply, and fixing his searching eyes upon me, as if he could not proceed without an assurance that we were not mocking either him or God with our request. His grave, scrutinizing look roused me from my partial indifference, so that I even felt ashamed of it.

"I do, indeed," I said; "you will quite please me by reading it."

The boy hesitated no longer; he took a Bible from a cupboard shelf, and seating himself cross-legged upon the floor, placed it upon his knee. Then having found the page, he rested his chin upon one hand, and laid the other upon the open book.

The boy's manner of reading the parable impressed me as I had never been impressed before, with its sublimity, and beauty, and pathos. His full and flexible though childish voice rivetted attention of itself: his emphasis was correct, because he knew and felt what he was reading; and the solemnity of his infant look, and the reverence with which he evidently bent over the book, were striking evidences of the power of God's word over the simplest of his creatures.

"And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran—'" Here the boy's voice failed him. His face grew pale, and his lip quivered, and his large eyes were swimming in tears. I, too, felt the choking in my throat; I heard Susan tittering, and felt shocked, and looked at her rebukingly.

"Well, we ought to feel," said the boy, speaking evidently with effort, "when we think that this is what God does to every one of us. To you and me, Susan; and some day we may feel glad to have such a father to turn to. Is it not so, Mary!"

"It is, darling," said Mary. "But you are more like the other son who never left his father."

"Nay, I think not," said the boy. "I think I should not speak as he did: but you shall hear." And he read on to the end, and kept his face bent over the book for several minutes, not liking to let us see how powerfully he was affected.

"You may understand, Miss Marples," said Mary, "why I like to hear James read. He brings out the whole meaning of everything. If one cannot feel oneself, there is no getting rid of the child's feeling. It sets us thinking that we are ourselves not quite as we ought to be. I am sure it has been so with me."

I could have acknowledged as much myself, though I did not. But I thought—perhaps even now God is calling me back to himself through this child. I called him to me, and bent over him with a full heart.

"You are a sweet boy," I said, "who taught you to read?"

"Papa taught me."

"And who is your papa?"

The boy looked wistfully at me for a few seconds and then turned to Mary.

"His dear papa is in God's hands," said Mary. "He knows that they shall meet again one day, and be happier than they are now."

I understood from this that his father was dead, and felt grieved that I had put the question.

"Yes," said the boy, "and I mean to do something wonderful to please papa and mamma. I always feel that I shall when I see mamma grieve. You see," he continued, looking down at his tiny feet and then drawing himself up, "you see I am growing a great boy, and ought soon to be doing something."

"You, poor baby! What can you do?" said Mary.

"Baby!" said the boy, curling his lip again, that's your nonsense, Mary. I'm *not* a baby. Why, Ellen isn't a baby, and she's two years younger than I am; we don't call Lilly a baby. Babies wear long clothes and people nurse them. Come now! Mr. Smithson says I shall be a man soon, and he'll help me."

"Well, James, you've all the will to do something, and I hope God will help you."

"There, now you talk sense, Mary. Of course, God helps everybody. Now, I'll go and see what mamma's doing.—You know I don't like to leave her long, because she frets, and then I talk to her. Shall I see you again?" he added, turning back as he was going out and addressing me.

"I hope so, love."

"Where do you live?"

"I live in this house; only just down stairs."

"Do you, though?" he said, his face brightening as he came fairly back to me. "Ah, Mary called you Miss Marples; then you belong to the good old gentleman that used

to come up to mamma when she was so ill, months ago! I'm so glad, and I'll tell mamma all about it.

"What a remarkable child he is." I said, as he closed the door behind him. "Does he live in the house?"

"In the next room," said Mary, "with his mother and two sisters, younger than himself. It's a very sad story.—His father was an author, a writer for magazines and newspapers, I think. They lived very decently somewhere in Islington, till difficulties drove Mr. Graham out of his mind, and then his wife and children came here. I thought her heart was breaking when she first came, eight months ago. I believe a subscription was raised for her; but friends won't do much, and she works hard, poor thing, just as we do, and getting less."

"And where is her husband?" I asked.

"In Bethlehem Hospital. It is a large public institution, and one might think people so afflicted would be treated well in it; but Mrs. Graham says her husband complains of being dreadfully ill-used, and she feels sure that he is.—It would grieve you to see her sometimes. I'm sure," continued Mary, suddenly snatching up a corner of her work and putting it to her eyes, "it makes one quite wretched to see what misery there is in the world!"

Yes! Mary was in the right place for seeing it. I sat lost in deep thought during several minutes. This outcast state of existence, upon which I was myself entering, seemed to have many redeeming points about it. My heart had been more interested; my thoughts more elevated during the one hour I had passed in that poor room than during my more than twelve months' sojourn amongst respectable and world-courted people. Here is the balance of good and evil, I thought. Thou bringest us nearer to thee, O God, by affliction. Here I shall not lose sight of Thee; here I shall better learn to know myself!

I took up the bible which the boy had placed upon the table. On the fly-leaf I found these words written in a small but fair hand:—"From a mother to her fatherless children. May the Lord look upon them when they have no friend left beside Him. Mary Lester." I turned the leaves over hurriedly and then put the book down. This

absorbing interest in others was new to me, and I began to feel oppressed by it. I resumed my work which I had only quitted for a moment.

"And you," I said, "how long have you lived here?"

"Nearly three years," said Mary, sighing.

"It will be three years in March since mother died," said Susan. "Father died six months before. And see Miss Marples, they took everything from us but these few things, and we used to be so well off, didn't we, Mary?"

"My father kept a toy-shop, and was in debt when he died," said Mary. "It was only right, the creditors taking the things, but you may be sure we found a great change, losing parents and all at once."

"And you had no friends?"

"Not any that would look to us: no!" said Mary, quietly.

How many lie desolate upon earth because those who *should* "look to" them consider their poverty a disgrace! At all events I was not the only one neglected and contemned; in outward circumstances I was not worse off than those who could look back upon a past that brought no blush of shame to their cheeks, no throb of indignation to their hearts.

"But we're not quite without friends," said Susan, tossing her head: "and we don't think to live in this way always. Mr. Smithson comes in to see us very often, and he's a friend of Mrs. Graham's, too."

"Mr. Smithson," said Mary, fixing her eyes with an uneasy expression upon Susan, "is a comic actor at one of the theatres. He was a friend of Mr. Graham's, and I believe it was chiefly through his means that Mrs. Graham got help. I have heard her say so. It was little James that first made him acquainted with us, and he has certainly been very kind in calling to inquire how we got on, and sometimes leaving us and Mrs. Graham a newspaper to read. It is not his fault that we have no time to read."

"Oh, I always read the newspapers," said Susan.

"Our poor parents were very religious," continued Mary, "and they had a great objection to plays. It would have grieved them to know that we had even this slight intimacy

with a player. But, Miss Marples, when one is left so lonely in the world, it seems only natural to be thankful for a little kindness, from whatever source it comes. Besides, I believe Mr. Smithson is really a good-hearted man. I hope he is for Mrs. Graham's sake, for he seems to be the only friend she has."

How soon I had become acquainted with the histories of these people; how readily I had acquired the kind of knowledge that is necessary to a right comprehension of character! Of the Browns, the Wiltons, and the Bontofts, I knew no more than met my eye from day to day. They might have all sprung from the same dunghill, and doubtless they did: and in different ways, but with the same aim, they made a struggle to thrive upon it.

The conclusion of my reflections was, that in one material respect I had profited by being reduced to the society to be found in Brooks' Court. Great depravity and horror there was to be met with, no doubt; but nothing worse than might be found in the highest circles of society. If there was a happy medium, this surely was it. I must accept it with its drawbacks; and this I was the more inclined to do, because deprivation rather than abject dependence seemed to be one of them.

And that night, after obtaining Aunt Betsy's consent to my scheme for providing Susan Lester with a decent dress, and having from my grand-father an assurance that he was better, I slept soundly, and had happy dreams, in which little James Graham figured very conspicuously.

CHAPTER IX.

It was some time before I could obtain work, even at such poor remuneration as the Lesters received; for the starving female population of London amounts to some thousands, and it speaks well for their first principles that so many amongst them are ready to wear away body and soul in a drudgery that scarcely suffices to keep both together, rather than fall into pauperism, or a life of sin. Whilst my grand-father was slowly recovering strength, it was a grief to him to see how I toiled late and early for less than sixpence a-day. It was grievous to him to keep me in that low neighborhood; and he spoke determinedly about not allowing me to remain there, when he became once more able to exert himself. But besides having a great horror of again going out as a governess, I knew very well that I stood a worse chance than ever of obtaining a situation of the kind. I could not apply for a character to any of the persons I had lived with, though I had done my best to please all of them, and I could not expect that my word would be taken in such explanations as I could give. I myself resolved to try for employment in some millinery establishment, where I understood as much as nine shillings a-week might be earned, as well as two meals a-day, and the privilege of returning home when I was not required to sit up all night. This was the height of my present ambition; but I was soon made to feel that it soared too high. Mary Lester, who had herself vainly tried for such a place through some years, assured me that I should not succeed without patronage, as these situations were eagerly sought for, the young ladies filling them holding themselves far above those condemned to work as she did. I resolved to try, however; and as Aunt Betsy

had unfortunately plenty of time to spare, not being able to procure constant work, she and I spent many weary hours in trudging to various establishments, not giving up our vain search until compelled by the fear of starvation in the meantime. And in order to understand how precious time is, it is necessary to be reduced to this alternative of earning sixpence a-day, or nothing. Work as hard as we could, my aunt and I earned no more than was sufficient to pay the rent, unless she luckily obtained a day's work out. It was little satisfaction to me to say I was not hungry, and eat as little as possible, for I saw that both my relations did the same, that we were all compelled to do it, and that the one sole satisfaction in the whole matter was the fair prospect of our all perishing together, and very speedily.—Jem, who looked in upon us daily, received several commissions to dispose of such things as we could best spare; and in this way I parted with the finery purchased for me by Mrs. Bontoft. Poor Jem's face lengthened at these increasing proofs of poverty; and I believe that he frequently robbed himself when he declared himself ready to swear that coals, potatoes, or bread, were wonderfully cheaper at some distant shop, lying conveniently on his daily route, but which it would be quite impossible for Aunt Betsy to attend. If anything could have been more distressing to me than this idea, it was to see my grand-father wandering to and fro in the dingy room, too weak as yet to go out by himself, too far gone in blindness to be able to read, and too much perplexed by our situation to offer any counsel. There was the additional great grief of knowing that, pined as he was, there was no chance of his health being restored; and as I sat at my monotonous and profitless work, from early morning until late at night, the old bitterness of heart, and impatience with Providence, and distrust in God, came back to me. I thought of my grand-father's blameless life, as compared with the worldliness of the dean of ——, and the libertinism of Colonel Leigh, and I could not understand why—if these were alike eligible for salvation—all this straying into error and trying in the furnace of affliction should be needed. I felt sure that there was no wisdom in so burdening my own mind with these perplexities; that I could

have loved God better and more if I had been allowed to loathe his creatures less; if I could reasonably have entertained one thought of thankfulness for the life forced upon me, whether I liked it or not.

Gradually we were compelled to understand that these depths of destitution contained a lower deep, to which, in all probability, we should have to descend. We were lodged even magnificently for our means; we were not able to pay this high rent, and Jem was eventually applied to, to procure us cheaper lodgings.

But we dragged on for a wonderfully long time—nearly three months—before we came to this. During that period the necessity for sitting close at work prevented my seeing much of the two sisters, or of Mrs. Graham, though I saw and heard enough to embitter my thoughts still more, and drive me further back from all trust in Providence. Of little James Graham, however, I saw a great deal; for not a day passed without his coming down to our room, and he would recite for us his store of patriotic verses, or sit, by the hour together, reading the Bible to my grand-father. I wondered what God meant to do with this child, whose sympathies were so strong for whatever was good or noble, and whose prospects were so clouded, whose position upon earth was so abject.

I was one day hastily called up stairs by Susan, who said that Mrs. Graham had been taken ill. Aunt Betsy was out, and I went. I entered the room, and found her in a fainting fit. Mary was bathing her face with water, and James was chafing her hands, and looking up to her piteously.

"She will soon be better," said Mary; "I have often seen her in this way before. Now let Miss Marples take your place, James, and go to your sisters, there's a good boy."

"I don't like to leave marr ma so," said the boy.

"But Ellen and Lilly are frightened," said Mary; "do go and tell them mamma will be better directly." And the boy left us. "I sent the children into our room, they cried so," continued Mary, as I commenced chafing Mrs. Graham's thin hands; "she has been to see her husband this

morning, and she says they are killing him, and it is just breaking——"

Here Mary broke down, and large tears fell from her eyes upon Mrs. Graham's face.

"You see it is just breaking her heart," continued Mary, rapidly; "and when one thinks what sweet children those are, it is quite pitiful. She is half starved, besides, poor thing! If one only had a little wine for her—but where to get it!"

I had often thought of the profusion of wine at Mr. Bontoft's when I saw my grand-father's weakness, and remembered that he, too, was half starved. Yes, it was where to get it for necessity! I had seen Mrs. Graham before, several times. She was a fair delicate woman, still young, and had evidently been well brought up. There was the curse of refined feelings upon her in the midst of this destitution and helpless endurance.

Presently she sighed heavily, and opened her eyes, and looked round the room.

"My children!" she said.

"They are in my room," said Mary; "let them stop there till you feel stronger. Miss Marples will wait here, while I make you a cup of tea."

"Oh, no, no! she said; "I feel better now."

But Mary made me a sign, and left the room, and just as she went out James peeped in, and his mother saw him.

"My boy!" she exclaimed, extending her arms, and he rushed to her.

I shall never forget the look of yearning love and deep sorrow with which she uttered those words, "My boy!"

"My child, that I hoped so much for only a few years back!" she continued, bending over him: "and dear, kind papa, that would have laid down his life for any one of us!"

"Don't talk in that way, mamma," said the boy, lifting up his swimming eyes; "you make me feel so unhappy."

"I won't, darling!" she said; "you shall not be teased, you dear pet! Mamma will be well soon, and then —— Oh, God!" she continued, with a sobbing sigh, "then we may do better. I am wasting your time and mine too, Miss Marples," she said, turning to me.

"Don't think of me," I said. "Shall I fetch my work and sit with you?"

"You are very good," she said; "I have met with a deal of kindness: but, oh; my trouble is heavy."

As she turned away her face, and I watched its expression of intense agony, I had some difficulty in restraining myself from falling upon her neck, and weeping away some of the pent-up sorrow that lay like lead upon my own heart.

I went down to my grand-father, and explained how matters stood, and then went with my work to Mrs. Graham's room again. Mary brought in a cup of tea, and then we three sat down at our dreary work together, and James proffered to read to us. The younger children, two pretty, gentle-mannered, little girls, remained with Susan. I had before observed how they could sit playing for hours together in a nook, hungry, and with no toy to entertain them, and extracting amusement out of their own yet inexhausted spirits.

As James read, I could not help wondering what we should do if he was not reading—how we should converse together—we whose hearts were all so full of bitterness, and anxiety, and sorrow. There was no topic for us in the wide world; its pleasures were nothing to us, and we were sinking under the terror of its oppression—a terror that froze up our words. There were almost impassable gulfs for all of us to overleap before we could speak hopefully of a promised life beyond the grave. That loving mother's thoughts were chained to a world in which her children were yet so young—in which they might suffer wrong, and drink deeply of the cup of sorrow, and be driven to the sins of necessity. (There *are* such sins, O ye who live in silken ease, fenced about by all the proprieties of life, and God is the judge of them!) Mary and I had a long career of unrequited toil before us, and the imperative wants of every day bound us, like slaves as we were, to the present.

We were seated thus when a knock came to the door, and Mr. Smithson entered. Mary and I rose up, and we went into her room. We found Susan reading a newspaper. The two children were evidently happy in their play.

"O Susan!" said Mary, "do attend to your work, that's a dear."

"I'm tired of work—nothing but work!" said Susan; "and I believe you are all blockheads! You won't read, and you don't know how the world's going on. There's plenty of people that would help us if they only knew how we suffered. How are they to know anything about it if we don't tell them? Here's a lord, a real lord, that talks so nicely in this paper about poor people like us; I wish we could see him, or that you would write to him, Mary; I'm sure he would help us, and Mrs. Graham too."

Mary shook her head, but this speech of Susan's helped to mature an idea that had been germinating in my own mind during the previous two hours. At Mr. Bontoft's I had read many modern works, whose authors seemed to be imbued with the genuine spirit of humanity. I thought that poor Mrs. Graham, the wife of an author so stricken down by the hand of God, had a claim upon these men that they would readily respond to. I said this to Mary then, but she again shook her head.

"Mr. Smithson is a man of the world, as well as a kind-hearted man in himself," she said; "you may depend upon it that he has done all that could be done in this way. But he will be sure to come in before he goes; we might mention it to him."

Poor Mary! how apathetic she seemed? how hopeless about everything save drudging on from day to day! This was common sense, which taught her to expect nothing better from the world; Susan and I monopolized all the genius, and there was a wonderful power in it. I even determined to speak to this Mr. Smithson myself.

And Mr. Smithson presently came in. What a singular face his was! Ugly and chubby, and with a twist in it that made one side longer than the other! An excellent comic face it was, no doubt; but the present expression of thoughtfulness sat oddly upon it. Do what he would, there was a drollery about it that made me consider it especially lucky that none of us were in a mind to laugh.

"Well, how are you all getting on?" he said.

"Much as usual, Mr. Smithson," said Mary.

"Work, work, eh?" he said; "all flat, stale, and unprofitable? Never mind. Here, you, come and feel in my pockets."

This was addressed to the two children, who ran up to him and dived into his coat-pockets, and drew forth sundry packets of sweetmeats and biscuits, and ran gleefully into their corner again.

"So there's no news stirring in your little world?" said Mr. Smithson, placing his hat upon the table and seating himself, and, to my astonishment, giving his face a twist that sent all the preponderance to the other side of it. "You remain *in statu quo?*"

"Yes, I believe so," said Mary.

"No beautiful variety to variegate existence in this world, noted for its changes? Pshaw! How ridiculous it is!"

"What, Mr. Smithson?" asked Mary.

"Devil a bit of change do I see, go where I will," said Mr. Smithson. "Nothing but the same penury, and strife, and suffering, the same bloated pride, and pretension, and humbug. Instead of supplying one with wit, the world brings one to one's wit's end;" and he drew his fingers through his profusion of dark hair in a desperate manner.

"Poor Mrs. Graham has had another fainting-fit to-day," said Mary. "Can nothing be done for her, sir?"

"What the deuce right have *you* to trouble yourself about Mrs. Graham?" said the actor, making a grimace. "Why don't you wrap yourself up in your—hem! Well, I suppose you have nothing comfortable to wrap yourself up in. Naked we came into the world, and naked we shall go out of it; but it's too bad to be naked all our lives. I say, Susan, look me up that paper."

"Here it is, sir," said Susan.

"Anything worth reading in it?" said Mr. Smithson.

"Oh, yes!" said Susan; "I've been reading the speeches of Lord Marchtown. Isn't he a kind man?"

"Lord Marchtown?" said Mr. Smithson. "A platform lord, all words and smoke. Well, you very green young person, what do you make of him?"

"Oh!" said Susan, tossing her head, "I'm sure if he knew of our troubles he would help us."

"You are, are you?" said Mr. Smithson. "Now, Susan, don't you think I'm a very ugly fellow?"

"You're not very handsome, sir!" said Susan, to Mary's evident dismay, for she looked up and reddened.

"Quite the contrary," said Mr. Smithson. "Now if I attempted to entertain the town with tragedy, action, and sentimental songs, the town would cast me off at once. I was born to my vocation, and cannot step out of it. It is just the same with a platform lord, who spouts sentiment and lectures for the people. He is great where he is, and you must let him alone. You won't damage him by attempting to take him out of his place, but you'll be sure to disappoint yourself. If you know of anybody that nobody else ever heard of, just apply to him for sympathy and help, but don't try the dodge on celebrities."

I thought this a good opportunity to chime in.

"Mr. Smithson," I said, "considering that poor Mr. Graham was himself an author, don't you think that some of our popular writers would help his wife and children if they knew how destitute they were?"

Mr. Smithson turned to me, with a twist of his face that brought the larger half of it on my side.

"Oh, that's your particular kind of worship, is it?" he said; "you make demigods of authors."

"No I don't," I said. "I worship nothing human; I have little faith in humanity altogether. I only speak of this as a possibility."

"Egad, Miss —— What's your name?"

"Miss Marples," said Mary.

"Miss Marples," continued Mr. Smithson, "you've the right sort of wisdom to begin life with. Distrust is said to be an ungracious thing, but it saves a great waste of feeling. Now, as you concede that authors are only men, I can come to the point at once with you. An author revelling in fame and wealth is not the sort of man to feel for destitution, though he can afford to say a deal about it in books. A poor devil of an author, who can scarcely live himself from day to day, will be much more likely to sympathize and share his crust with you. James Graham, a writer of considerable power, and a very voluminous writer, too, was little

known, as his name seldom transpired. No one could gain any glory by helping him—another great drawback in this world, where people like to have their good deeds known. Besides, there are hundreds of like cases, and the few that will help cannot do much. Well, the fact is, a great many amongst us are born to a life of suffering, and we must fight through it as well as we can."

Everything I heard corroborated the fact that the rich and the middle classes, while they make use of the poor for their own convenience and of necessity, hold them aloof, as something loathsome to the sight and touch; and, much stronger in their prejudices than any slave-holder ever was, (for *he* does not shrink with horror and disgust from the human chattel that he buys and sells), produce in England such a wide line of demarkation—not between vice and virtue, ignorance and knowledge, talent and imbecility, but between poverty and wealth, as is met with nowhere else on the broad earth amongst creatures of the same spirit and clay. I cannot be solitary in my belief that this system is highly favorable to the growth of infidelity. The pauper who cannot learn from parish chaplains that he may one day sit down in the kingdom with a lord or duke, or, to strain a point, even with a prince or king, may by chance seize the idea that Christ will be less fastidious; but the degradation of his state has eaten into his soul and made it abject, so that he entertains more reverence for, and more fear of, a wealthy and influential man in the world, than he possibly can entertain towards God. It is the same with the slaves of both sexes, who fancy that they are independent because they are free to drudge, as no slave ever did, for a pittance too meagre to sustain half a life, or to lie down in their garrets and cellars and die at once.

I only saved myself from this state by refusing to bow to anything. That likeness to God within myself sufficed to me; I was not to be subdued by the craving necessities of the body; I would not voluntarily lie down under the wheels of this great moral Juggernaut, whose victims might not rejoice in the sacrifice they were compelled to make.

Starvation and contempt only served to make my resistance stronger. I had enough of both to try my powers of

endurance. In the month of March, in spite of every drawback, my grand-father gained sufficient strength to be able to walk out. He renewed the subject of my obtaining another situation, and I saw that he was determined to send me from home if possible. In this matter I was compelled to yield, for many reasons, independent of the fact that I never had any inclination to resist what I found to be my grandfather's decided will. Considering how little I could earn at needle-work, it was easy enough to prove to me that my absence would not make those left behind worse off, whilst I might at least stand a chance of helping them. My wardrobe had decreased and was growing shabby, and it was evident that if anything in this way was to be done there was no time to be lost. Once more my grand-father and myself proceeded to the register office, having made a great effort to obtain money, and I received the address of a lady who wanted a governess to instruct five young children, and who bargained for piety and humility as indispensable qualifications. Nothing daunted by this, but with a misgiving that this pious lady would be more difficult to deal with than any of the others, I set out for her residence, accompanied by my grand-father, on the following morning. We had agreed that I should refer to Mrs. Wilton for my character, for as I had given her entire satisfaction, except in the one respect of not being able to clothe myself out of nothing, we both thought it possible that she would not say anything to prevent me from getting another place. I had a suspicion which I kept to myself, that Mrs. Bontoft's interested patronage had injured me in this quarter; but I had committed no absolute wrong in accepting an offer that promised well at a time when I was quite free and almost penniless.

Mrs. Reynolds, the lady upon whom I called, resided in Portland Place. There was no evidence of self-denial about this abode of piety, which appeared to be sumptuously furnished, or in the gaudy livery of the servants, or in the luxurious dress of the lady herself. I underwent a strict examination, especially with regard to my religious principles, and here I could assure her that I had been strictly brought up to the Church. This lady stated her terms to be sixteen pounds a year, out of which I was to pay for my

washing. Still, scarcely sufficient to provide me with decent clothing, and the great hope of my heart was as far from being realized as ever, I gave my reference, and was desired to call on the following morning.

On the following morning, when the footman opened the door, I fancied his look portended no good. He left me standing in the passage while he went to announce my arrival, and presently Mrs. Reynolds walked down stairs. She paused at some distance from me, and surveyed me with a look of virtuous indignation.

"I am really astonished, young woman," she said, "that you should have had the assurance to refer me to Mrs. Wilton. She tells me that she found you very deceitful and unthankful, that she raised you from a state of great poverty, and that you requited her by worming yourself into the confidence of her friends, and spreading reports about her as false as they were scandalous. I don't want to hear any reply; an attempt to justify such conduct would only be worse than the conduct itself. I am satisfied that I have had a lucky escape. John, open the door."

The lady swept away before I could make any reply. The servant, who had stood by all the time, opened the door, and I had nothing for it but to walk out. If I had not stood convicted, I had felt degraded by this unexpected attack; and the fierce passions that lay slumbering in my heart were roused into a tempest of wounded pride and indignation against those whose position gave them an advantage over me which they were so ready to use ungenerously and uncharitably, and without allowing me a chance for self-help. No wonder there is so much servility and hypocrisy in England, when it is well known that the testimony of a superior is all-powerful, whether right or wrong, unless the matter becomes public, and decorum demands that justice take its course. Even this latter is not always the case. As for me, what did these women care whether they cast me forth to starvation or to sin? With Mrs. Bontoft and Mrs. Brown I should have fared no better; the one would have enlarged upon my impertinence, and the other on my vulgarity and deceit.

The greatest agony in all this was having to explain to

my grand-father. As we walked along I softened the account as well as I could, while wishing to impress upon him the uselessness of seeking further for a similar situation. This was scarcely needed, as we had neither money nor time to waste in the search.

"God help us!" said my grand-father, after remaining silent several minutes; "this has been an evil place to us!"

And what other place in broad England would have been better? It was the fault of a system, not of a particular spot; had we fared any better at ——? What was to be done next? That was the question, and none of us knew how to answer it. I returned to such work as I could get of necessity. Aunt Betsy labored at the same drudgery, rarely being able to get anything else to do. Our clothes and everything else belonging to us were disappearing fast, and we knew that we were rapidly approaching a state of utter destitution.

I had often thought of uncle Stephen during these long and painful months of our absence from him, and contrasted his uniform and disinterested friendship with what I had met generally from the world. I did not see that Christianity made people better; the most rigid church-goers were the prosperous, who seemed to be uniformly selfish, and overbearing, and vain-glorious; and those accounted as pillars of the church were the least charitable and gracious of all. If I respected what I saw was good in my grand-father, I could not help being aware that his principles chiefly served to make him a more easy prey to the vicious and the powerful, and I turned with impatient disdain from the thought of following in his course. This spiritual disobedience, which I could not help, was not accompanied by any outward act of rebellion. Under any circumstances, I would not have renewed my intercourse with Uncle Stephen without my grand-father's sanction. As his name was never mentioned amongst us, I had little hope that one who dreaded the effect of his principles more than poverty and death would ever remove the decree that kept us asunder.

But all this served to convince me that my grand-father was short-sighted as well as weak-minded. Why would he not understand that I was in greater danger of being driven

to infidelity by my communication with Christians, than I could have been by any mere assailing of Christianity from Uncle Stephen? The separation, too, from this early friend gave the charm of distance to all that had been amiable and attractive in his character, softening down its more rugged aspects, and drawing me towards himself, if not his principles, more and more.

Early in March Mrs. Graham's husband died. Mr. Smithson, who saw him the day before his death, declared it to be his conviction that he had died from the effects of ill-usage. He asserted that he had seen his body covered with bruises, the effect of blows, and that he had threatened to expose the servants of the institution, who had laughed at and defied him. Whether this harrowing statement was all true or not, it had its destined effect upon me. I more than ever loathed a country in which such atrocities could be perpetrated by the strong against the weak; where usage rendered remonstrance availless; and in which the emptiest forms of religion served to screen iniquities that the heathen and the savage never dreamed of. Under the same roof where I dwelt there was agony that I could not bear to witness. I was a coward when looking upon distress that I could not relieve, sorrow that I could not minister to. Both Mrs. Graham and James had clung to a hope that the husband and father would eventually be restored to them, and I shrank from the details that Aunt Betsy brought me from time to time of their overwhelming and wordless grief. I did all that I could do; I sat two days and nights working incessantly, unable to think of sleep, not feeling the want of it. Aunt Betsy, to her honor, and my grand-father too, devoted themselves to the desolate woman. About one o'clock on the second morning, whilst Aunt Betsy was yet up stairs and my grand-father lay sleeping in the closet, the door of our room was opened, and some one entered. I did not lift my eyes from my work; I knew that, whatever was coming, it would come soon enough for me. I did not even stir when I was aware that some one sat down near me and breathed heavily.

"I believe I shall hang myself some day; I see no help for it," said a voice that I recognized to be Mr. Smithson's.

"The misery up yonder is enough to make one hate life. Miss Marples, are you listening to me?"

I lifted my head and looked at him, and turned to my work again.

"I have been talking to Mary," he continued, "and now I must talk to you. You are in the same house with these poor creatures; you all sympathize with them; and I have no one else to trust to. To-morrow I am compelled to go into the country to fulfill an engagement. I'll tell you exactly how the case stands. When poor Graham first fell into this state, overtasked by anxieties and incessant mental labor, a few amongst those who had known him contributed from their hard earnings a weekly sum for the relief of his wife and children. One by one these contributors have fallen off, for months have elapsed, and most of them are needy men. I have myself a wife and seven children, and I cannot keep out of debt. You must know that Mrs. Graham could not keep herself and her children by needle-work, even if she had health, and my opinion is, that she will never recover this blow. Now it seems a hard thing to say, but it must be said—they must all go into the workhouse."

My work dropped from my hands and I looked up.

"What! that dear boy?" I said.

Mr. Smithson turned his head away and blew his nose.

"Yes," he said, "that dear boy. God bless him! he's a noble little fellow, and I love him as if he was my own: but what can I do? I've been speaking to the parish authorities about them to-day; and to-morrow, I expect, they will be looked after. Don't drop your head in that despairing manner, Miss Marples; I look to you to set an example of firmness. As to poor Mary, she is quite prostrated. You see how this unhappy lady and her children will need to be sustained. As to me, I promise before God, as I did to her to-night, that I will never lose sight of her children. You may think that mine is a hard task when you come to consider that I am compelled to act the part of a buffoon every night for the amusement of the public with the burden of these thoughts upon me. Unless we are made of stern, enduring stuff, we may as well lie down and die at once."

"I cannot see them," I said; "I cannot see her or James."

"This is a weakness that I did not expect from you," he said; "it is cruel to them. It is better to go where they are going than to live here and starve, or be turned into the streets. You see the alternative. Something may be done hereafter: God knows?" he continued, pushing his fingers through his hair, and making an odd, buzzing noise with his lips. "When they are yonder, Miss Marples, it would cheer me very much to know that they were sometimes visited; it would cheer them. If only for the sake of that dear boy, say that you will go. He loves you very much."

I felt a strong inclination to weep, but heart and brain seemed alike dried up.

"I promise you," I said; I could not say anything more.

"God bless you!" said Mr. Smithson, rising hastily, and extending his hand. "I don't know when we shall meet again. I shall be some months absent, and Mary will write to me. I shall hope to find you here, but——"

He wrung my hand, passed out of the room, and I never saw him again.

I had passed about two hours more alone when the door was again opened, and little James came hastily forward, and flung his arms around me, and buried his face in my dress. I threw my work down and drew him closer towards me.

I had not seen him before since we had heard of his father's death.

"Dear boy!" I said, "you must be a man, indeed, now, and console your mother!"

He lay heavily upon me for several minutes, neither weeping nor speaking.

"How came you to be up at this hour, James?" I said; "it must be three o'clock."

"I've been to bed," said James, lifting up his face, that was very hot and flushed; "I've been sleeping in Mary's room with Susan, and Ellen, and Lilly. No, not sleeping; I've been waking and thinking there. I thought I should like to go and kiss ma again, so I got up and dressed myself. I kissed all them, too—you know who I mean; and then I went into ma's room and kissed her. Mary was asleep, there, but your aunt was sitting up, and she scolded me, and

said I must try to sleep. But I can't sleep, Margaret—(I had taught him to call me Margaret.) I kissed ma again, and she did not notice me, though her eyes were wide open, and she did not speak a word. You'll remember and tell mamma that I kissed her, Margaret."

I thought the child's mind was wandering.

"You shall go to bed now, darling," I said, "and to-morrow I will talk to you. Come, let me see you up stairs, James; you will be ill."

"Margaret!" said the boy, suddenly starting from me, and standing erect, and throwing his head back proudly, "I know what they have all been talking about—Mary, and your aunt, and Mr. Smithson. I heard Susan say we were going to the workhouse. You won't say it's not true, Margaret, because you know it is. But they'll never get me into the workhouse, Margaret."

"My dear boy!" I said, holding out my arms towards him, but he put them back.

"Listen to me," he said; "Mary does nothing but cry, and nobody will listen to me. For papa's sake, for mamma's sake, I won't go to that place. I am old enough to do something for myself. I can go errands, I can do work, and there is plenty of work to do. I can do anything but go to that place,—anything but leave you all, Margaret!"

And he came to me again, and clasped his arms round my neck, and put his soft cheek to mine.

I held him in a long embrace; at the moment I forgot everything beside himself. Oh, my God! how much I had learned to love that child!

"Margaret," he said at length, raising his sweet face, "where is your grand father?"

"He is asleep, love."

"In there?" he said, pointing to the closet.

"Yes, love."

"Can't I kiss him?"

"Not now, darling; you shall when he awakes in the morning."

"Nay, but now, Margaret. I have a fancy to kiss him. You call me a pet, and you won't humor me! See! I'll just go in on tiptoe, and I won't wake him. Shan't I?"

There was no resisting him. I allowed him to go, and he went and came back to me.

"I have kissed him and he did not stir," he said, speaking in a low tone. "Do you know, Margaret, when I think of heaven, and I often do, I always seem to see your grandfather there—as if he was there already: that's silly, you know, but I can't help it."

"You will meet him in heaven, darling!" I said: and at the moment I spoke as I thought. How strangely I wavered betwixt that heaven and this earth!

"Now I must go," said James. "How cold it is, Margaret! isn't it? Kiss me again."

I held him again in a long embrace. It wrung my heart to hear him say so little about what had evidently affected him powerfully; it was touching to see how he tried to feel as well as appear brave.

"Good night!" he said. "You will remember what I said to you, and that I have given you a dozen kisses."

I took the candle and went out upon the landing with him, and told him to go to bed directly, for he shivered. I held the light up, and watched him disappear at the bend of the stairs. Then I listened till I lost the sound of his small feet as he ascended higher.

It was a raw, cold morning, and I, too shivered as I reentered the room. I drew together the atom of fire in the grate, and brought my chair closer and resumed my work. I was glad that I had seen this child, yet I felt a strange uneasiness about him. I wondered if he would resist being taken to the workhouse, and how we should all bear to see force used if he did. Then I wondered if such a luxury as I coveted with my whole soul—the luxury of rescuing this family from a fate dreadful to all of them—had ever been understood and appreciated by those possessing the means of gratifying themselves and helping others. Did the hundreds of like cases of which Mr. Smithson had spoken supply a solitary instance of this union of earnest sympathy, and power, and enjoyment?

I did not sit down to bewail what appeared to be inevitable; I was proud, and readily excited to resentment. I contemplated with indignant impatience this system, in-

volving a two-fold suffering. Why was I cursed with this power of feeling for other—I, that had no means to help them or myself?

In the midst of many bitter thoughts, my uneasiness about little James was uppermost. I could not feel sure that he had gone to bed again, and I was pretty certain that he would not sleep. I fancied him sitting upon the stairs, in the cold and darkness, brooding over what was to happen when daylight came; or listening at his mother's door, anxious to know whether she revived or spoke. I had learned from Aunt Betsy that she had fallen into a kind of stupor, and appeared indifferent to everything that went on. I sat tormenting myself in this way, but I resisted the impulse that would have led me to go and look after James. "I am tormented enough," I said; "why should I trouble myself further? If God can see this child, and understand what he suffers, and must suffer, and leave him without help, I can do the same. I shall be following a great example, if not a good one; I will not aid Fate in this determination to keep me down!"

If any sleek, unimpassioned individual, one of the comfortable growths of prosperity, should shrink at these thoughts as impious, I can still say that I consider them something better than his soulless apathy. The germ of nobler aspirations and gentler feelings was in them; if far from heaven, they were still farther from the grovelling selfishness of earth.

I sat till the day broke; and it was not till I felt my fingers too benumbed to work readily, that I found my fire had gone out. I was busy lighting it, when Aunt Betsy came in.

"Is James here?" she said.

"No; isn't he up stairs?"

"He's not with the children; I've just been to look at them. Have you seen nothing of him?"

"He was with me two or three hours ago. Oh, aunt, what has become of him?"

"Keep quiet," said my aunt; "I'll just go down and inquire."

He knew no one down stairs, and I had little hope that

she would find him there. I forgot that I was cold, almost that I was wretched. I felt that it would be a happiness to me if she found him. I leaned over the banister, breathless with anxiety.

Aunt Betsy returned. She could hear nothing of him. I told her what he had said to me, and the truth flashed upon us both at once.

"Why didn't you look after him when he said that?" she exclaimed. "God help the child! what can have become of him?"

No idea of his intention had struck me when he spoke; I had burthened myself with profitless thoughts that shut out truth from the present altogether. Now I was bowed down by a terrible remorse and anxiety.

"Is Susan awake?" I said. "She and I had better go to Jem, and tell him to make inquiries in the neighborhood."

"Do so," said my aunt, "and I'll wake grand-father."

I threw on my bonnet and shawl, and hurried up stairs.—Susan was dressing herself, and the two children were both awake.

"Where's James?" said Ellen.

"He will come presently," I said. "Susan, I want to speak with you."

I drew her outside the door, and told her what we feared had happened. She was not without feeling, for she began to cry, and told me she would accompany me directly. I went down stairs, and waited for her. Presently we proceeded together to Jem's cellar, and he, always ready to enter into a tale of distress, promised to find the boy if he was to be found in London.

It was a dreary feeling to me, returning to the house that did not contain him. The idea of his being lost in the world was terrible; death would have been preferable to this; and I thought that, under any circumstances, I could never know happiness if he was not found.

The day wore on. Aunt Betsy assured me that this new calamity would not affect Mrs. Graham, who seemed insensible to everything.

"The mercy of the Lord!" said my grand-father. "He is very good to us!"

I thought this an odd kind of mercy. I heard him with impatience as I thought of the certain suffering of the child.

Early in the day a workhouse official came to fetch this family. My dislike to mere looking upon suffering kept me aloof; but I caught a glimpse of the pale, feeble woman, as they carried her down; and I kissed the children, and and promised to come and see them, and to bring James with me if possible.

CHAPTER X.

THREE or four weeks passed and nothing was heard of James, and his mother had died in the meantime. In the meantime, too, our affairs became more desperate. I cannot tell what prosperity may do in the way of hardening, but I do know that adversity and suffering may render us callous to much. This perpetual punishment roused my rebellion, and I would not help fate to crush us down. I had no idea of resignation, which appeared to me to be nothing more than an acquiescence in evil. "There is nothing for it but to be indifferent," I said; "what does it matter how we get through this life, which we did not seek?" It became clear that we could no longer afford to pay so high a rent, and Jem was applied to, to know if we could not procure cheaper lodgings. He looked ruefully at us when this question was put. Our present lodging was cheap, considering the accommodation it afforded. We required two rooms, and in the confusion of our trouble we had ventured to hope what was unattainable.

"I know what you might do," said Jem, "but you wouldn't like it."

He was urged to speak. His proposition was, that my grand-father should sleep with him in his cellar, in which

case he could find a small room for my aunt and myself for three shillings a week. When we considered that Jem slept upon a heap of straw, my aunt and I remonstrated against this; but my grand-father overruled us, and it was determined that it should be so.

We gave notice to leave our present abode, and Jem procured us another lodging. It was some distance off, and I one day expressed regret at leaving Mary.

"It won't make much difference, Margaret," said Aunt Betsy; "Mary will soon be in a better country, and you would not see her much longer if you stopped here."

"You don't mean to say that Mary is dying, aunt?"

"She is, though; and a blessed thing, too, for her: what has she got to live for?"

I could not understand the blessedness of being allowed one fervid glimpse of life, and sickening at it, and turning away with thankfulness to die. What was there that I could understand?

Two nights before we quitted the house, I lay restlessly beside Aunt Betsy, unable to sleep. I thought of all the early instruction I had received, and of which I had never been able to make anything. I was particularly puzzled by the injunction to love even our enemies, and yet not set our affections upon earthly things. I was singularly blinded not to comprehend that an enemy had an immortal spirit, in whose welfare God allowed me to feel a common interest with himself. I was troubled, and in darkness and my thoughts were very bitter, when I heard a hurried step upon the stairs, and some one stopped at our door and knocked loudly. I called to inquire who it was, and Susan answered me,—

"It is me. Mary is very ill, and I wish you would come up to her."

I hurried on a dress and shawl, and accompanied Susan up stairs, Aunt Betsy promising to follow us. Susan, who had a light, seemed very much alarmed; as we approached the door she stopped me.

"Would you mind going in alone? Mary frightened me so. Look: she woke me, making such a dreadful noise in her throat; and when I got a light she stared at me and

said, 'Oh, Susan, it's hard to die!' Then I ran down to you. I can't go in again yet."

I took the candle from her and went in alone. I caught a glimpse of the white face, and the silence struck a foreboding chill to my heart. I approached closely and bent over her. Her eyes were wide open and fixed upward; her lips slightly apart, showing the white, glistening teeth; her hands firmly clenched. I placed the back of my hand upon her mouth. No breath came, and the lips were cold though her cheek was warm. I was aware that I stood, for the first time, in the presence of death.

I was awed, but not terrified; involuntarily I knelt down by the bedside and buried my face in my hands. Her death appeared very sudden to me, who had never observed an change in her. Was the young spirit yet hovering over that poor room, or with the sorrow had all the remembrances of earth passed away from it?

Aunt Betsy came in, and, without speaking, she closed the girl's eyes and crossed the clenched hands over the bosom.

"Go down now," she said, in a hushed tone. Susan is frightened. She can sleep with you. I shall stop here. I can do all that is needed for this poor clay myself."

I rose up, and bending for an instant over the dead, I kissed the pale cheeks and forehead. Then I went down to Susan. Her grief was very clamorous, and to the last she refused to look upon her sister again: death seemed to frighten her. On the afternoon of the following day a pauper coffin was brought, and at night Mary's remains were carried away.

I looked over her papers, and found several letters from Mr. Smithson, which I had seen before. They related chiefly to James for whom he had advertised repeatedly without any result. I wrote informing him of Mary's death and gave him our new address.

Susan accompanied us, and remained with us for a time, for she could not bear to enter her own room, even after her sister's body was carried out of it. We were all anxious about this girl, whose violent grief soon subsided, leaving her more thoughtless than before. We in vain tried to keep

her to her work; upon some pretext or other she would go out, and at the end of a week she informed us that another girl had agreed to live with her and pay half the rent. My grandfather made inquiries into the character of this girl, and finding that it was altogether disreputable he remonstrated with Susan, who defended herself very boldly.

"I'm not going to work myself to death, as Mary did," she said. "The world thinks no better of us for that. I won't be clothed in rags all my life, and half starved; and nobody has any right to say anything if I can better myself."

It was, indeed, a terrible thing for a young girl left alone in the world to look forward to a life of incessant toil and struggle for what did not suffice to keep soul and body together. It was still worse to fall into a career of shame and certain greater misery. These experiences were stumbling-blocks in my way. I thought of the pious parents, who had made a pet of this girl; of Mary, who had watched over her with such solicitude. It seemed a mockery to tell me that these, the lost, were happy, while this object of their solicitude was allowed to cast away all their counsel and rush headlong into a life of degradation and sin.

Two or three times after this Susan visited us, dressed in tawdry finery and bolder in manner than ever. The stern rebuke she met did not suit her, and we necessarily lost sight of one another. We had lost sight, too, of all those towards whom we had been drawn by strong cords of sympathy; sorrow, and difficulty, and privation seemed to lay waste with the speed of a tempest, and once more we stood alone upon the earth.

Alone, except for poor Jem; and how kind he was! He still contrived to get a little life out of us for himself, though what with hard work, and poor fare, and anxiety, we had not much worth calling life left for ourselves. At a time of great difficulty, and as a last resource, I applied for a place of all-work at a neighboring shop, and was dismissed with the brief intimation that my looks were against me.

In what respect they were against me I had not been informed. I felt more humiliated by this repulse than I had ever been before, though I did not know why. Was I too

young, or too delicate-looking, or too well dressed, or was there something worse in my appearance? It was not vanity that made me feel abashed, almost frightened. With everything else against me, it seemed hard that my looks should be against me too. Shortly afterwards I fancied I found the solution to this mystery.

Neither Aunt Betsy nor myself could find anything better to do than the ill-paid needlework, and we generally sat up at it half the night. One morning early I missed her from my side, and looking up I saw her extended at full length upon the floor. I went to her instantly, and spoke to her, but she did not answer. She was lying on her face, and I tried to lift her. But she was too heavy for me. I thought she was dead.

As fast as my trembling fingers would permit I dressed myself, and went out of the room. I knocked at the first door I came to, but it was very early in the morning and no one answered me. I ran down stairs and knocked at another door, and a man's voice called out, "What's the row?"

I hastily explained how matters stood, and begged that some one would go up stairs with me. The man promised that his wife should follow me directly, and I went back. In a few minutes several women entered the room, for human extremity will readily excite human curiosity, if nothing more, though I do believe that the poor are generally willing to help one another. Aunt Betsy was lifted upon the bed, and all declared that she was still living, though quite insensible. Some said that she had had an attack of paralysis; others, that it was a fit of apoplexy. I asked if there was a doctor living near, and begged that one might be sent for.

"The doctors hereabouts don't like to come to poor folks, if they're not paid something beforehand," said one of the women. "Have you any tin?"

Guessing that tin meant money I wrung my hands, and said I had none. "Good God!" I said, "she surely will not be allowed to perish—some one will come to her?"

"We must have the parish doctor," said another woman; "here, I'll go an' fetch him myself," and she went out.

"Blow the doctors!" said a man, who put his head in at

the door. "The woman 'll be dead afore thou gets back. I'll go and see if old Snelling won't come."

As far as lay in their own power, these poor and evidently coarse people gave us help. One of the women went for my grand-father, and before he arrived Aunt Betsy opened her eyes. I spoke to her, but she did not seem to know me; and we soon ascertained that the use of her right side was gone, the hand and arm lying quite as if dead. Her speech was gone too, but she made odd sounds, and struggled to get up, or to push us away with all her remaining strength. My grand-father was the first to arrive, and he bent over her with mute sorrow. The man who had been for a doctor returned to say that old Snelling refused to come; he said it was a case for the parish: and when the woman who went for the parish doctor arrived, it was only to say that he would come presently.

It was late in the afternoon when he at length did arrive. If this had been a case requiring immediate help, here was another instance of the power of poverty to crush us from the face of the earth. He examined her very coolly, and declared that there was no hope of her recovery, though she might live as she was for years to come.

This seemed as terrible as anything that could have happened to us. Aunt Betsy had been our main stay, being always determined and persevering, never murmuring if never hoping much; and I individually had more faith in her resolution than in my grand-father's patience. That she who had been so strong, and apparently in better health than any of us, should have been thus suddenly stricken down, was inexplicable to me, unless I concluded that Providence was in a league with the world to put us down. There was something like despair in my heart, but the old feeling of resentment and defiance rose up to neutralize its effects.

The doctor questioned us rather roughly about our means of obtaining a livelihood, and he regarded me with a glance that was particularly offensive. My grand-father explained his own partial blindness and helplessness, and the struggle that my aunt and I had to earn sufficient to keep us alive from day to day.

"Then I suppose she'll have to go into the house?" said the doctor.

"I did not think my poor sister would ever come to that," said my grand-father, clasping his trembling hands together. "But God's will be done! This poor child can neither attend to her, nor work for her support; and I, alas! am incapable of doing anything."

"Well, I'll report the case," said the doctor. "I suppose, the sooner she's taken away the better?"

My grand-father only bowed his head, and buried his face in his hands. I longed to say something; I had never felt so strong to do as I did in this our worst extremity: all my past failures seemed as nothing, and I was determined to rescue Aunt Betsy from this cold and degrading charity if I could.

"O grand-father!" I said, "do not permit this! I will work hard, if you will only help me to keep up the spirit of independence; if you will only not sink down as you do, lower day by day, till you make life unendurable to me! I will work, if you allow my aunt to remain with us; if not you paralyse all my efforts."

"Don't reproach me, Margaret," said my grand-father, in his meek way. "I may have committed many mistakes in my life, but I always thought to do for the best. This child," he continued, turning to the doctor, "is unaccustomed to this kind of trial: you see how willing she is, but she has not the power to do what she would."

"I think you ought to be thankful to have your aunt well taken care of, eh?" said the doctor, looking at me.

I turned away from him, all the rebellious pride of my heart flashing in my eyes. God help me, how I hated the whole world! how I loathed myself as the chief cause of all this misery! how the anger and contempt of the moment weakened my affection of my grand-father!

I could not sympathize with tameness, though I could readily feel for suffering. I could have respected my grand-father's piety more if he had boldly stood up in defence of the rights and doctrines of Christianity, instead of sitting meekly down to endure its penalties. If I must be made familiar with the hypocrisy, and outrage, and wrong practis-

ed in the name of Christ, I must also be permitted to speak, to rebel against it, or die. I considered it an oppression and a wrong that we, so willing to work and working so hardly, should not be able to save ourselves from being beholden to charity; that the charity thus forced upon us should be made as degrading and repulsive as possible. I was in the toils, however; and I only did what I could. I acquiesced outwardly in the necessity against which my soul rebelled; and Aunt Betsy was taken to the same work-house in which Mrs. Graham and her children had been placed. We had both visited the latter several times, and had been struck by the great change in their manner and appearance. Their hair had been cut close, they were clothed in the work-house livery, and work-house influences had changed them spiritually still more. Except that they appeared cowed and frightened, there was almost an idiotic apathy about them, that contrasted strangely with what they had been such a short time before. They received our caresses without making any response; they saw us come and depart, and preserved the dogged decorum that was enforced upon them. They wore the badge of the worst description of human slavery; for in the work-houses of England no man can bear himself like a man, and no woman struggle for the smallest privilege of her sex, and no child find exercise for the bounding thoughts and tender sympathies of childhood.

In proportion as I wrenched myself away from Christianity—and I did, altogether—what was there to bind me to it, save the suffering against which I rebelled?—I felt resolute about standing boldly in my own defence as an immortal creature; for betwixt me and those with whom I came in contact, there was something more than the clay that can so readily be beaten down by clay. My aspirations all tended to what was great and noble, though I had never been allowed to act greatly or nobly. There was a power within me superior to the outward power; if I had possessed no hope or confidence in myself, there was no restraining influence to prevent me laying down life at once; and I did not fear death, or believe that any judgment beyond the grave could afflict me as had done the judgments of this

world. I was always within hearing of some spirit-voice that told me to go onward; I felt that my rest was not here,—not amid oppression and degradation—even if I might only look on to the retributions of time.

I resumed my work, with a conviction upon me that some new change would wrench me away from it suddenly; for the wildest hope would not lead me to imagine that I could pay our rent and get life out of it for my grand-father and myself. I could not keep altogether from Aunt Betsy, though she was not conscious of my presence when I went, and these visits encroached sadly upon my time. During an interval, when my grand-father was too ill to go out, or to leave his heap of straw in Jem's cellar, I one day went to the work-house alone. I found my aunt much as usual; her bodily strength seemed great as ever, and when I bent down to kiss her she struck me.

"What, you're at it again!" said the nurse, seizing her left arm and shaking her violently. "If I had my way I'd put you in a straight-jacket, you old vixen! She'd kill every one of us if she could, the varmin! and she eats like a horse!"

"Be gentle with her," I said; "pray be gentle."

"Oh, yes, be gentle indeed!" said the woman; "take care of her yourself, and see how you like it. People troubling us with their relations, and then grumbling! it's very nice, that is!"

Troubling us! This woman was a section of the great We, the potentiality of earth, whose possibilities may not be interfered with, and whose dictation aspires to absolutism. I observed this spirit in all the work-house officials; a sense of being personally put upon by the destitution and affliction placed under their charge, as if they not only bore the trouble but the cost, and considered both as thrown away. Could humanity be more degraded anywhere, ye whose sympathies wander to far-off lands and to another race?

As I lingered at my aunt's bedside a man came up, whose dress, perhaps, entitled him to be styled a gentleman. The nurse curtseyed to him as he approached.

"Who's this?" he said, pointing to me.

"It's the woman's niece, she's come to see her," answered

the nurse meekly. How meek she could be to that man, who had his own amount of worldly power over her!

"What do you dress in that flaunting way for?" he said, rudely seizing the skirt of my dress, and dropping it. "You look as if you could keep your aunt yourself; and you could, I dare say, only you won't. The parish has enough to do amongst you. Do you work at all now, and what do you get a week? Come, I'm not to be deceived: I'm up to all the dodges."

I had involuntarily glanced down at the genteel, but now faded dress, which my grand-father had bought for me, and which I had worn at Mrs. Wilton's. How could I summarily explain to this man that I had not the power of replacing this dress by a plainer one; that I was compelled to wear what I had, or wear nothing?

How, too, could I, at an instant's notice, quell the insubordination that was in me, and that was so antagonistic to the spirit of this free British soil? I spoke what occurred to me at the moment.

"If by work," I said, "I could have kept my aunt from this place, she would not have been here. If any power is given me in the future, I will take her away from this place, —I am not satisfied with the treatment she receives. I appeal to God from it and you!"

"She's drunk," said the man, turning to the nurse; "these handsome girls all come to that, the vagabonds! What did you let her in for?"

"Please, sir," said the nurse, humbly, "how could I help it? She was let in, and we've orders to receive visitors.—I'm sure *I* don't want the like of her here!"

"Now go about your business," said the man, turning to me roughly; "and if you come here again, come in a proper state. I'll look after you sharply, you may depend upon it."

What had I to appeal to in that place? I cast one agonized look at my aunt, one glance of scorn and defiance at the two persons in whose charge I left her, and walked out. Drunken I was, but not with wine: long months of starvation had taken effect upon me, and the scene I had just escaped from confused me: my head was giddy, and I

staggered as I walked on. I had a long way to walk, too, and I was in a crowd, and for a long time I did not notice, further than to hurry on as fast as I could, several smart taps that descended upon my shoulder, as if from a stick behind. I thought this might be the result of accident, and crossed the street; but the blows were repeated, and then I turned round. I found myself close upon a stout, red-faced, elderly man, who had every appearance of being wealthy. He was attired in the finest broadcloth, and there was a fat, self-satisfied, important smile upon his face, that was as impertinent and offensive as anything could well be betwixt him and me. He held the identical stick in his hand.

"If you are the person who struck me," I said, "I will thank you to keep your distance. You have no right to annoy any one in the streets."

I turned and walked on, but he now kept up at my side.

"Come," he said, "you've a very pretty face, and I think you want a new dress. If you'll go with me, I'll buy you one."

This was the very way to excite in me a disgust that almost took away the power of speech. I hurried on in the hope of escaping him, but he kept up with me and annoyed me further, until I was compelled to turn upon him again.

"If you will not believe that this conduct is offensive to me," I said, "I must claim protection from some one. You miserable old sinner! cannot you understand that you have no power over me?"

I quickened my pace, and now he fell behind; but again and again the stick descended upon my shoulder as before. What more could I do than I had done to save myself in this case? Near home I got into a denser crowd, occasioned by some disturbance in the street, and I was crossing over to the other side to avoid it, when my shoulders were suddenly seized, and I was fairly wrenched round.

"Who the h—ll are you that talk to respectable people in that way? you infernal tatterdemalion!"

It was the inflamed and angry face of the stout gentleman with the stick that met my now really frightened gaze.

I had roused his choler; I had spoken insolently to the great man, and he was not used to such liberties. He spoke in a loud, passion-choked voice, and people turned to look at us. He had his revenge, and I got home as well as I could.

It was a sultry, hot day in July,—hot enough, God knows, in the close street where I lived, and in the attic, upon whose roof the fervid rays of the sun were poured down all day long. What, with my exhaustion through want of food and rest, my mental suffering, and this intense heat, I thought during several minutes that there was nothing for it but to die. Feeling so exhausted as I did—too much exhausted to return to my work—what was I to do? I was in arrear with my rent; I had been threatened with expulsion if I did not pay it on a certain day, and I knew that I could not pay. My grand-father, too ill to leave Jem's cellar, was partly kept by him; and with all this help I could not manage to keep myself.

I sat a long time idling in the chair, upon which I had first fallen. One advantage of my experience was, that my thorough contempt for the people I encountered served to break down the ordinary barries between us. I was not to be awed by money or power, used only for base purposes; and I regarded their possessors only as so many brute beasts. On the other hand, I loathed myself for thus lying at the mercy of those I was compelled to scorn. As to God—I did believe there was a God—I could not help it if he chose to look calmly and indifferently on during these contentions amongst his creatures. I came to the conclusion that I might only rely upon such power and resolution as were in myself for self-defence.

And what was the use of that power within myself, which just served to show me what was right and wrong, and wrench me away from infamy, and hold up the abuses of petty authority to my individual disapprobation? I did not know; but I sat with clenched hands and a determined will to do something, when Jem came in. I was afraid that my grand-father's illness had become more serious. I had seen him in the morning, and had promised to see him again in the course of the day.

"Now, don't you never fret for nothin'," said Jem in answer to my eager inquiry. "That blessed old creeter feels hisself worse, an' he wants to see you; but he'll be better in no time. I'll tell you what he's done for me—set me straight on the way to heaven, an' I mean to follow where he goes. Lord! what sinnifies all the good things of this here world when some day or other they must come to nothin'!"

I could not enter into the spirit of Jem's philosophy. I was just considering how I was to procure a little of the chief good of this world—money, without which it was pretty clear that my endurance would be tried too far. I could trace all the evil that had befallen me to the want of it. Poverty had not only subjected me to ill usage and imposition, but also to distrust. As the chandler's wife had said, "my looks were against me." My shabby gentility, even what small portion of beauty I possessed, only served to surround me with suspicion. The law of England requires that poverty be made as unsightly as possible—witness the effects of work-house treatment,—and the poverty that has not yet come to this can only be supposed to be on the way to it. The world was evidently disposed to believe that I was thriving on a life of infamy.

Poor Jem, the only human being who would give me credit for anything better, was being put upon by our necessities. Even if my grand-father had been well enough to be removed, I could not have thought of bringing him to the home from which I myself expected to be thrust forth. What was to become of me in that event I did not know; I was determined not to be driven into the work-house: all the rest was chaos to me. I rose up to accompany Jem, and we walked out together.

CHAPTER XI.

As Jem and I passed along, he pointed out to me two well-dressed people, a man and a woman, both of whom he said obtained a good living by singing at night in the streets.—People will pay for a momentary gratification of the kind if they happen to be in humor with themselves, and at night the pleasure-going people, who are the most liberal, are chiefly abroad. I don't know what made this account dwell in my mind at the moment; I had no thought of doing likewise then: perhaps it struck me that this form of pauperism was more attractive than the other.

I found my grand-father very weak; he seemed to be sinking gradually. Jem had managed to prop him up by placing a sackful of shavings behind, and when I had seated myself at his side on a low stool the faithful fellow went out, saying he should be back in no time.

My grand-father took one of my hands and held it between his own caressingly.

"My poor child," he said, "I did not think to bring you to this when, nearly two years ago, I came here in the hope that we might be able to live by our industry. It has pleased God that two of us should be stricken, and you are left to struggle alone. In this extremity I can only advise, I will not pretend to dictate to you. I have no fear that you will stoop to anything that is dishonorable; it is dreadful enough to contemplate for you a long life of toil and privation like this. I may not be allowed to remain much longer on the earth, Margaret, and then you will be still more desolate; then, too, you will have to be your own advisor, and you are young to be so left. I have tried to bring you up in

the fear of the Lord, but I will place no further restriction upon you. You know the reason why I have kept you out of the reach of Uncle Stephen; I account the death of the body light in comparison with the death of the soul. Considering how I am leaving you, however, I can but leave you free to act as you think best, or as you may be compelled to act. Uncle Stephen would not allow you to want bodily, perhaps—I may say, I feel sure he would respect my last wish that he should not interfere with your spiritual welfare. I however dread the influence of such a man over an impulsive creature like yourself, as much as I ever dreaded it. In him you have already found more truly Christian practice than you found in many professing to be the followers of Christ. I have not been blind to this fact, Margaret, all these months, and it has pained me to the soul. Now, I do not say to you, continue to keep away from Uncle Stephen; I cannot do that now: but while you honor him for the help that he will readily afford you, shun his dangerous sophisms, for there is spiritual death in them. If this must needs be, Margaret, it had best be done at once: not for my sake but yours, for it is little more I may require upon earth, and I do not personally shrink from a pauper coffin and grave—poor Betsy will have no better—though for your sake I wish it had been otherwise."

This speech was painful to me for many reasons. I was already sufficiently alienated from Christianity without the intervention of Uncle Stephen. I could not afflict my grand-father by telling him this truth; I could not reassure him by any evidence that I remained firm in my first faith. My pride revolted at the thought of throwing myself upon Uncle Stephen in this abject penury, and as a last resource, after not treating him well by disappearing so suddenly, and hiding from him so pertinaciously. I could not bear to contemplate my grand-father's death; I clung to the hope of his recovery. There was no part of his speech to which I could give a satisfactory reply, so I answered evasively. Without intending to make a merit of shunning Uncle Stephen, I prayed to be allowed to struggle on a little while without his help. As I spoke hopefully of continuing my own efforts, my grand-father gazed wistfully upon me.

"There is one thing to be seriously considered," he said: "whether it is more degrading to enter a work-house, and so be indebted to public charity, or to allow one's-self to be a burden upon a poor fellow like this Jem. You cannot, my child, maintain us both by your labor; you must not be left alone in the world. I wish you to consent to my removal at once from this place."

I knew that it was madness to think of him remaining where he was, lying upon straw that scarcely protected him from the earthen floor, that seemed always damp; half suffocated by the close, impure atmosphere; and almost all along without attendance, as well as medicine or proper food. If I would much rather have seen him dead than the inmate of a work-house, I had no thought of allowing him to linger on in this state until more than a parish coffin would not be needed. The very desperation of my thoughts had struck out an idea, and I resolved to make one more trial before I gave up.

"Give me this one day, grand-father," I said; "I fancy that fortune is about to turn in our favor. If I am disappointed, I will not seek to detain you here longer than to-morrow."

My grand-father fell back exhausted with the effort he had made; he murmured a few words expressive of his acquiescence in what I thought best. I had never before had so much responsibility upon me; there was no one to control me in any way, and I launched out in a manner that neither Aunt Betsy nor my grand-father would have ventured to do. When Jem came in I sent him to fetch the woman whom I had seen in his cellar some months before, and who had lately been kind in occasionally waiting upon my grand-father. She had washed for him, refusing any further remuneration than an occasional pound of soap; and no one that has not been reduced to the same straits, can imagine the relief that this assistance afforded me at a time when everything fell upon myself. Upon this occasion, I gave her nearly all the money I had, to purchase some sago and wine for my grand-father. I was convinced that his chief ailment was starvation; and I did not see the use of hoarding the trifling sum that my ordinary labor would not

allow me to increase. These petty cares, the sordid produce of days for whose return I felt no thankfulness, inspired me with an impatient disdain.

I left the woman with my grand-father. I could make no bargain with her for any further attendance than what her own natural kindliness of heart prompted her to give. I could not promise that I would pay for her time and labor; yet when I thanked her with a full heart, and she told me not to bother myself, I felt more confidence in her than I could have felt in any mere hireling.

It was still broad day-light when I went back to my room. The house in which I lived was tenanted by people who seemed to be honest, and who worked hardly enough, but, like many hard-working people in England, they were improvident. The men were generally drunk from Saturday until Tuesday or Wednesday; yet they could in the short time left earn enough for dissipation, if nothing for comfort. The man who earned most in this house was an ivory-turner and carver; he was very clever in his way, but his family was in a more forlorn condition than any other in the place, because he was seldom sober. Then the locality was cursed with all the horrible consequences of drunkenness;—quarrelling, foul language, fighting,—miserable wives with their eyes blackened,—more miserable children, dragged up in any fashion that chanced, running about wild, always ragged and dirty, and half-starved, sometimes crouching in corners in terror, and sometimes running out in the middle of the night screaming murder. No man who brings himself to the work-house by this reckless course of improvidence has a right to better treatment than he receives; and, doubtless, a large proportion of the pauper slaves of England is supplied by like means.

A portion of my work was lying upon a chair, and I tossed it away impatiently. I had not returned to set down to *that*. I had tasted no food since the morning; and the woman who lived in the next room came in to tell me that her kettle was boiling, if I wanted to make tea. I accepted her offer; and I must say for the very poor, amongst whom I lived so long, that such little acts of kindness, apparently trifling, but very serviceable, are not unfrequent

amongst them. I swallowed a cup of tea, without milk or sugar, and ate some dry bread; and then I sat down to wait for the night and darkness.

I needed both for the work I intended to do. The great scheme upon which I had been brooding half the day, and which I trusted to save me from something worse, was to sing in the streets, as Jem had informed me others did with advantage. I did not allow myself to shrink from this task, distasteful and terrible as it was to me. My horror of the work-house officials was something still worse; if I could have forgotten them for a moment, my courage would have oozed away. I called to my aid the contempt with which human beings had inspired me. What did their thoughts matter to me? As to the exhibition I was about to make of myself,—none knew me; none would remember me after passing out of my sight. There was, fortunately, no moon; and at about ten o'clock I walked out of the house. I had muffled myself up as well as I could, and I bent my steps towards a quiet quarter, not far off, in which were several genteel streets and squares. I persuaded myself that it would be best to begin in an empty street, if I could find one, and sing on until some one came, by which time I might become more used to it. I could sing with some taste and skill, for my grand-father and Uncle Stephen had been excellent singers in their day, and both had taken great pains with me. I at length found a secluded street, made a desperate plunge into the middle of it, and commenced.

I had been singing some time when I heard a door open. Some one called,—"Here!" I went forward, and a footman placed sixpence in my hand. This good fortune took my voice away for several minutes; I had what poor little James called a "choking in his throat;" but I made another desperate effort, commenced again.

Presently I heard footsteps approaching; nearer and nearer they came, and then stopped; and I sang on. I lifted my eyes, and saw that two gentlemen were standing very near me; then I began to falter again, and was about to stop, when one of the two spectators came forward and seized my hand.

"Margaret!" he exclaimed, "why, this is worse than singing the songs of Israel in a strange land! Come with me."

It was Uncle Stephen, and he spoke with the old tone of authority. He placed my arm in his, still grasping my hand, and turned to his companion.

"You go home, George, and tell your mother I have found them," he said; and George disappeared. "Is this the best thing you can find to do in a Christian land?" continued Uncle Stephen.

"The very best," I said, "as you will acknowledge when you hear all. O Uncle Stephen! we have suffered since you saw us last!"

"But Thomas Marples to permit this! Is he dead, or has trouble driven him out of his wits?"

I explained that this was my first attempt of the kind; that my grand-father knew nothing of my intention; and I begged that all knowledge of it might be kept from him. We were walking slowly down the street, when Uncle Stephen stopped.

"You must show me where you live," he said. "Are we going the right way?"

We were not, and we turned back. I told him he would be still more shocked when he saw the place in which my grand-father was lying; too ill, I feared, to be removed. I gave him a brief account of our troubles, and Aunt Betsy's affliction.

"Betsy Marples in a work-house!" he exclaimed. "She who was always so energetic, so resolute to struggle for independence! Damn the ——! the devil!"

I had never heard Uncle Stephen swear before; I was sorry to see him so moved.

"I am almost grieved that we have met," I said; "it is too bad that we should bring further trouble upon you."

"Hold your tongue, Margaret; you know nothing about it," he replied. "There wasn't one amongst you fitter to enter this inhospitable wilderness of London than a child! For the future I shall expect *you* to obey *me*."

I thought it necessary to announce him to my grand-father, who was too weak to endure any sudden emotion

he therefore agreed to wait outside when we arrived at Jem's cellar. I found the latter standing over the fire, stirring some sage he was boiling. He said my grand-father was much better, and had had a long sleep.

"I do feel stronger, Margaret," said my grand-father, who was now awake. Of course he did! He had simply been starved, and nourishing food was the remedy for his complaint. I told him, as gently as I could, of my meeting with Uncle Stephen. For a moment he seemed greatly moved; then he requested Jem to raise him up.

"You have brought him with you, I suppose?" he said. "Tell him to come to me."

I fetched Uncle Stephen in. Tears rushed to my eyes as I witnessed the meeting of these two, who had been friends from boyhood, and through the course of a long life.—Grasping each other's hands in silence, both looked eagerly into the face of the other. Uncle Stephen at length shook his head.

"A pretty dance you have led me this year and a half!" he said. "George and I have been looking for you all over London. I even advertised you, as I might have done any other missing articles. I promised, in the usual style, that if you would communicate with me all the past should be forgotten and forgiven, and that I would never interfere with your plans. Did that never meet your eye?"

"Yes," said my grand-father; "I saw the advertisement twice. Mr. Chaundy," he continued, turning to me, "pointed it out to me. What could I do, Stephen? If we had been prosperous, you would have heard from us, as I told you; as it was, I knew we could only bring trouble upon you, perhaps more upon ourselves."

"O Thomas, Thomas, you might have trusted me!"

"I hope to be able to do that now," said my grand-father. "You see this child has no friend left beside yourself.—As for me, I am nearly blind, Stephen, and I ought to hope that I shall not trouble any one long."

"You've had your own way long enough," said Uncle Stephen; "now I've got you fast, and I shall have no mercy upon you. I shall expect you to leave this place in the morning, whether you are well enough to leave it or not.—

The longer you stop here, the worse you will be. Where is that fellow gone to?"

He looked round for Jem, who, with his usual delicacy of feeling, had gone out. I opened the cellar door and saw him leaning against a lamp-post, and beckoned him in.

"Jem has been about the best friend we ever had," said my grand-father, turning towards him. "I don't know what we should have done without him."

"He's a fine fellow!" said Uncle Stephen. "I saw that at first. So you don't preach one thing and practice another, eh? Shake hands!"

Poor Jem seemed to put out his hard, dirty hand, with some diffidence, but Uncle Stephen shook it warmly.

"We shall be capital friends by and bye," he said. "Now I must give you some instructions. I want to remove this old gentleman to-morrow; in the meantime, he must have some nourishment. What have you got to give him?"

Jem said he had some sago and wine, which seemed to have done him good.

"I don't know that he could have anything better," said Uncle Stephen. "And so you are his nurse?"

"Me an' Sally takes it turn an' turn about," said Jem.

"And who is Sally?"

"A neighbor of mine, as 'll do a'most anything for anybody," said Jem.

"You've got into capital company, Thomas," said Uncle Stephen. "Well, I must see Sally to-morrow, and you too. Now, Thomas, I shall take Margaret home with me to-night, and remember that you are to come to her. If you don't by Jove, you shan't see her again?"

My grand-father smiled.

"I have nothing to say against your arrangement, Stephen," he said. "I don't know how to thank you for taking such a heavy load of trouble off my mind. God bless you!"

"And God bless you, Thomas! I believe in God as much as you do, though Betsy always would say I didn't. Now keep yourself quiet till morning, you've talked enough. Margaret, bid your grand-father good night."

I approached and kissed him, and received his blessing,

and I shook hands with Jem. Uncle Stephen drew him into a corner, and spoke with him for a minute, and then we two walked out. We walked to some distance in silence: and then Uncle Stephen called a coach, giving an address to a street in Camden Town.

We drove on for sometime in silence; at length Uncle Stephen spoke:—

"I'm taking you to my sister's house, Margaret," he said. "In her young days she knew your grand-father and Aunt Betsy well: she ought to be glad to see you. My nephew, George, is of the right sort; though, confound him! I can make nothing of him. You must feel quite at home, remember."

I murmured out something. I did not feel quite sure of a welcome from these relatives of Uncle Stephen, who were, I understood, partly, if not altogether, dependent upon himself. He was not rich, besides; he had lavished nearly all he possessed upon them years ago, and it was natural to suppose that they would regard with jealousy such claimants upon his bounty as we were. I was further troubled about my dress, remembering that first impressions go a long way. I had that night attired myself in the most dilapidated garments I possessed, and none of them were by this time in a very flourishing condition. I anticipated something disagreeable; but at the same time I felt that this new state was not to last long. It was only a step forward in the weary march that was to lead me—to what? The coach stopped. I saw an open door, at which stood a gentlemanly young man, with a lighted candle in his hand. He led the way into a nicely-furnished front parlor, and then Uncle Stephen introduced me to his nephew, and George Ratcliffe held out his hand very cordially.

"I am happy to see you, Miss Marples," he said. "I am sure I may well say so, in consideration of the state Uncle Stephen has been in about you; but I can truly say so on my own account. I hope you found the dear old verger and Aunt Betsy all right, uncle?"

Uncle Stephen shook his head. "Where is your mother?" he asked.

"She complained of headache when I got home, and went to bed. You see, uncle, we didn't exactly know——"

"Pshaw!" said Uncle Stephen, interrupting him; "ring the bell and tell Jane to bring some supper."

Uncle Stephen took off my bonnet and shawl. I wished to retain the latter to hide my ragged dress, but he would not let me. Jane, the single servant of the small establishment, who was very smartly dressed, eyed me curiously as she brought in and arranged the supper-tray. Uncle Stephen addressed me in French, and alluded gaily to old times. He reminded me how rigorous he had always been about keeping me at my lessons.

"I always had the future in my mind," he said; "I wished to make you perfect in as much as I was able to teach. Now see the result: you speak French better than George here, who has been to a public school and a university. As a musician, I should not be ashamed to exhibit you anywhere. As to general knowledge, Heaven defend us from all that is contained in that little head!"

"I owe you a great deal in this respect, Uncle Stephen," I said: "and yet these attainments seem to be of little use to me in the world. Do you really think I shall ever be able to make a living out of them?"

"Why, if you dwindle down into an old maid, we may set you up in a school as a last resource," said Uncle Stephen. "As to drudging in the ordinary governess line—that sublime idea belongs wholly to your grand-father. I never entertained it, nor do I now; nor the other plan either, just yet. Take a glass of wine now, and go to bed, for it's nearly one o'clock."

Uncle Stephen went out for a moment, and I heard him whispering with Jane in the passage. In the absence of the mistress of the house there might be some difficulty about accommodating me. George seemed uneasy: out of his uncle's presence he was, either purposely or helplessly, reserved. I sat upon thorns till Uncle Stephen came in the room again.

Presently he entered. "Jane will show you to your room," he said. "Now good-night, and mind you sleep soundly. To-morrow we will see about a thorough reformation."

He kissed me, and George shook hands with me, and I followed Jane to a back sleeping-room on the first floor.—She was very civil, and showed me a bell that I could ring if I wanted anything. I found a night-dress on the pillow, and the bed looked luxurious enough to invite one less weary than myself to sleep. I could not sleep, however; I was already impatient with this new state of dependence, and what Uncle Stephen had said roused my anxiety as well as curiosity. It was not his intention to make a governess of me, and never had been;—what, then, did he intend me to be or to do? It was useless speculating on this subject. I only felt that Uncle Stephen had ill studied my character if he entertained any idea of condemning me to a life of dependence and idleness. The destitution from which I was just rescued had been accompanied by a wild sense of freedom from control that had an especial charm for me. I, who had all my life been so completely under the strict government of others, had a passion, if not talent, for governing my own affairs, which gained upon me after that brief trial of the sweets of liberty, under circumstances otherwise discouraging enough. The only one thought that gave me real satisfaction was the belief that my grand-father would now recover speedily. All the events of the last two years came back to me that night, from my first meeting with my father, whom I detested, to my last parting from little James Graham, whom I loved so much. I wished for many changes of circumstance, but this that had happened was not one of them; I was still left powerless as ever in myself. Late in the morning I fell into a heavy sleep, from which I was awakened by the servant, who came with her mistress's compliments to inform me that breakfast was ready. I was annoyed at having overslept myself, and hurried to go down, though I would have given a great deal to have been a hundred miles away. My dress altogether was in a terrible condition when examined by broad daylight; and I was angry with myself for having accompanied Uncle Stephen so readily, when I might have remained a night longer in my own lodging. Regret was, however, availless; I was compelled to go through with what lay before me. I descended to the passage, and was ushered by

Jane into the back-parlor. Mrs. Ratcliffe was seated alone at the breakfast-table, and she rose at my entrance and extended me three fingers, which, when I touched them, seemed as cold and unpliable as might have been the three prongs of a fork. She looked younger than her brother, and might have been fifty-three or four; rather slightly made, fair in complexion, and with evidences of having been pretty. She was quite what is called lady-like in her manners; but that does not mean having the manners of a gentle-woman. It was the very excess of her politeness that gave me to understand how much of an intruder I really was. I inquired after the gentlemen, and asked if they had gone out.

"Oh, you are laboring under a mistake, I see," said Mrs. Ratcliffe. "They did not sleep here last night. My house being so small, and only having one servant, I could not do with them at all. They sleep at my son's chambers in Gray's Inn, and sometimes take their meals there. What they are about this morning I can't imagine; however, my brother left word he should be here to dinner."

This disconcerted me very much, for the prospect of passing several dreary hours in the society of this very frigid lady would have been intolerable enough if I had not been so encompassed by perplexities and anxieties. I had, myself, managed badly, and Uncle Stephen had done no better, though he meant well; and the very best-intentioned men are the most liable to commit blunders in apparently small, but really important, matters. In his determination to take care of me, Uncle Stephen had overlooked or disregarded the commotion my sudden appearance would occasion in the orderly household of his sister. From her manner altogether, and from what she said, I could only understand that she was very much surprised to find me there, and that she was in a state of some anxiety respecting what was to be done with me.

"It distresses me to put you out of the way as I must be doing," I said. "I expected to have seen Uncle Stephen this morning."

"Dear me! do you call him *Uncle* Stephen? It seems

very odd to me, you know, as there is not the slightest relationship."

Here was another repeller. My face flushed, and I said, "Having been taught to address him by that title from my infancy, I scarcely knew how to name him in any other way."

"My brother has always been very eccentric, I know," said the lady. "In fact, it would have been a great advantage to him if he had married early in life; he has many extravagant notions that a wife might have corrected."

This speech, delivered in quite a cordially-confidential tone, was followed up by a string of apologies for the apparent rudeness of leaving me alone.

"The fact is," she said, "I have for several years past been in the habit of visiting every morning an old friend of mine who is bed-ridden; and if I missed once she would think directly that something dreadful had happened. I am really so sorry, but I hope you will excuse me."

I begged she would not mention it.

"If you want anything," she continued, "you have only to ask Jane; and I shall be back in an hour or two."

I was left alone in the very snug parlor; and I might have been placed there for the purpose of learning the real unimportance of externals in the matter of human happiness. I had been much happier in Jem's cellar. There was a book-case and a piano in the room; but I did not turn to either. I sat lost in thought, or paced moodily about for several hours, during which Mrs. Ratcliffe did not return.—At length a loud knock came to the street door, and to my great joy Uncle Stephen entered.

"Now, how do you get on?" he said, holding out his hand, briskly; "all right, eh! Where's my sister?"

I told him she had gone out.

"Gone out!" he said, with a slight frown. "Oh, well, never mind. I only told her to be sure and be at home at dinner-time; and we dine here at four o'clock. Now, have you had any lunch?"

I said I did not want any.

"Oh, stuff and nonsense!" he said, ringing the bell vio-

lently. "Jane," he called out, "why don't you bring some lunch up? Come, make haste I'm in a hurry."

I assured him that I could not eat anything; but he made me take a glass of wine and a biscuit.

"Now," he said, "put your bonnet and shawl on directly, and come with me. I've got a coach waiting at the door, and as we go along I'll give you all the information."

I obeyed him very gladly, and in a few minutes we drove off.

"I've given the driver the address of your lodgings, which I obtained from Jem," he said, when we were seated. "You must pay the rent, and bring all your things away. George and I took your grand-father to a nice airy lodging in Islington this morning, and we left Jem to attend him. He'll be quite strong in a week, and then we shall get on famously. As to you, you must at present remain with my sister."

"Uncle Stephen," I said, "I feel grateful for your kindness, especially to my grand-father, but I cannot consent to become such a burden to you or your sister. I wish to do something to maintain myself. I have hitherto failed, chiefly through being unable to obtain a character. If either you or Mrs. Ratcliffe gave me one, I should, I dare say, do very well,"

"I told you last night, said Uncle Stephen, "that I had no intention to hire you out. My views are at present altogether different, and I will explain them shortly. As to being a burden upon me, you know very well, or ought to do, that you will be nothing of the kind; nor can you very well be a burden upon my sister, seeing that she is quite dependent upon myself. I have some claim upon your obedience, Margaret, and I *shall* claim it."

One of the great facts of life is, that every individual's personal experience brings out latent truths, that can only be thoroughly understood or dealt with by himself. I had found this out before now, and it was the basis of my struggle for some independence of action. I could not complain of Mrs. Ratcliffe's conduct to her brother, or say, what I knew to be true, that my presence in the house was a great nuisance to her, and that she regarded his interference in our behalf as a personal injury. I, who could scarcely be

said to belong to anybody, dreaded above all things becoming a burden to any. I could not help thinking that Uncle Stephen's eccentricity was leading himself wrong.

"I know," I said, "that you have always been lavishly generous,—always forgetting yourself in others. I learned that long ago. All that I have learned since teaches me that I ought to have some reliance upon myself. I do not pretend to be wiser than you are, Uncle Stephen; but, circumstanced as I am, it seems clear to me that I ought to be placed in some way of earning my own living. I have been a burden upon others too long already; and the very few who care for me may not remain with me always. Don't you see——"

"Oh yes, I see," said Uncle Stephen, interrupting me; "I see that you are going to kill us all outright! Now, you very wise little person, since you will make an old woman of yourself before your time, let us talk reasonably together. You like to be independent; that is your great,—what do you call it?—*forte*. I want to make you independent. You would rather patronise others than be patronised. Well, you shall patronise my sister: will that do? I am quite serious, Margaret; I hope to place you in a position that will enable you to do this; I expect to see you rise in the world, and drag us—her, at least—along with you. This is an old-cherished plan of mine, and I think you are in duty bound not to thwart it."

"You are mocking me, Uncle Stephen," I said. I could make nothing of his words.

"Bless my life?" said Uncle Stephen, "am I not old enough to know that getting through the world is no joke? I tell you I know what I'm about, and you must trust to me. There's only one thing I stipulate for;—you mustn't allow George to fall in love with you."

"Uncle Stephen!"

"Don't mistake my meaning: if he was good enough for you in all respects, I should wink at your running off together to-morrow morning; but he isn't, and I have other views for you. Now, you see, here we are; so make haste and collect your things. Take this purse and pay what you owe, and get some one to help you."

I ran hastily into the house, paid my rent the first thing, and then went up to my room. Here I changed my dress, and easily bestowed in one box all that belonged to me. Indeed, we had been compelled to dispose of so much, even to the boxes, that only one dilapidated trunk remained, and this I gave to the woman who lived in the room next mine, and who helped to carry my box to the coach. When I was again seated, Uncle Stephen took out his watch.

"I've ordered the driver to go on to Islington," he said; "we've plenty of time to see your grand-father and get home to dinner."

I considered this very kind and thoughtful and I said so.

"Oh! you think I can do right sometimes, eh, Miss Margaret?" said Uncle Stephen, laughing.

A very short drive brought us to the pleasant cottage-house, with a small garden before it, in which my grand-father now dwelt. We found him reclined upon a sofa in the parlor, and Jem with him. And what an odd-looking Jem he had become! Uncle Stephen had clothed him from head to foot; not with new clothes, but good ones that fitted him. At present he looked awkward and confused, but very happy.

We passed half-an-hour with my grand-father, who already seemed much better, conversing chiefly about Aunt Betsy.

"I shall see her to-day," said Uncle Stephen; "and for the present I shall pay a weekly sum to ensure her proper attendance. Who knows? she may recover."

"And in the meantime what a burden we all are upon you, Stephen!" said my grand-father.

"Nay, if you begin that subject I'm off," said Uncle Stephen, rising. "Margaret here has been harping upon it till I'm tired. Oh, Thomas, Thomas! thou man of little faith! do not wrong our old friendship by talking and thinking in this way!"

There was scarcely any resisting the heartiness of Uncle Stephen. As for me, I was young and romantic, and what he had said to me filled my mind with many vain dreams. He might know more about me than I know about myself; perhaps my father's heart had been touched, and he had

seen that it was, at least, his duty to help me on in the world; perhaps he meant to adopt me (I knew that he was unmarried when I saw him last); perhaps he was dead, and had bequeathed me the means of independence. I had something to learn from Uncle Stephen, and I could not separate what he had said from this haunting idea of Colonel Leigh.

And though I really did not wish to see this relenting spirit in the latter—though I would much rather have risen up myself and kept aloof from him and his, circumstances made me contemplate, with satisfaction, such a second-best sort of destiny as the above possibilities promised. There was so much that I wanted to gain and to do—and at once! Relief, in the first place, from this heavy sense of obligation to Uncle Stephen. Then the pleasure of myself providing for my grand-father and Aunt Betsy, and of prosecuting the search after dear little James Graham; and tending his sisters; and striving for the reformation of Susan. All this I wished to do, and what I considered a glimpse of the power to do it broke down all my patience. O money, money! did ever any one need money as I did?

The dinner that day was very dreary to me, with all my thoughts thus occupied, and my spirit on the alert after the unattainable. George came in just as it was served up. He appeared to be about twenty-eight years of age, and had good, but rather heavy features, and was inclined to be stout. It struck me that he was very listless in manner, and slovenly in dress, for a young man; and he did not appear to be addicted to study or dissipation, either of which pursuits might have accounted for his appearance. I had been inclined to dislike him, but I changed my opinion before dinner was over. Uncle Stephen seemed quite at home, and Mrs. Ratcliffe was frigid and polite as ever.

"Sit here, Margaret," said Uncle Stephen; "you shall have George for your *vis-a-vis*. He's a sad, dull, ungallant fellow, but you must excuse him. You know you're a sort of cousins, though you meet now as strangers to one another."

"What nonsense you will talk, Stephen!" said Mrs. Ratcliffe, glancing at Jane, who was in attendance.

"Not such nonsense as you suppose," said Uncle Stephen. "I should have been Margaret's uncle in reality, if, years ago, Betsy Marples had not refused me for a husband."

"How you talk, Stephen!" continued Mrs. Ratcliffe, evidently annoyed.

"It's quite true," said Uncle Stephen; "she refused me twice."

"Do tell us all about it, uncle," said George; his face quite brightening up with expectation. He did not notice his mother's attempt to frown him down.

"Well," said Uncle Stephen; "I first made an offer to Betsy when I was about thirty years old. She was a year or two older than me, and not at all handsome, but there was a principle in all she did, and a sturdy independence about her, that pleased me. She heard me out, and answered me like a woman. 'Stephen Leath,' she said, 'I respect you because you are an old friend of my brother's, and because I never knew you act unlike a man. I respect you too much to burden you with a wife, whose only portion would be an old bed-ridden mother; for I will never leave her, Stephen, and she shall not be thrown upon you. Let us be the friends we have always been, and say no more about it.' I tried to alter this decision, but in vain. Some years after, when old Mrs. Marples died, I was in the same mind, and tried my fortune again. 'Stephen,' she said, 'you are looked up to as a thriving man, but you are not thriving: you know no more of the value of money than a child; you squander it on all sides, and I will not help you to squander it. I will be your friend and advise you, if you like to take my advice, but I will be nothing more. You have a position to keep up, and so have I. While David Marples (that was her brother) holds his head high above me, and disowns both me and my brother because he has money and we have none, I will not become the wife of any honester man. We must be friends still, Stephen, and nothing more.' This was the substance of what Betsy said, mixed up with some objections on the score of irreligion; which, however, went for nothing, as she had made up her mind independent of them. Now, if Betsy Marples had been a less nobler woman than she was, she would have been my wife."

"Well, I'm sure you've some wonderful things to relate," said Mrs. Ratcliffe.

"That's just the sort of aunt I've been wanting all my life," said George; "she would have given me good advice, and I might have profited by it."

"I'm sure that's very complimentary to me, George, considering that I've been giving you good advice all your life, and to little purpose," said Mrs. Ratcliffe.

"My dear mother," said George, "with the best intentions in the world, you haven't the knack of going the right way about it. You've always taught me that to keep up a genteel appearance in the world was the main business of life. Now I've discovered for myself that gentility is all smoke!"

"You've very odd, notions, I know," said his mother, "and it's astonishing to me who you inherit them from. You would even have been mad enough to give up your profession, if you had not seen that doing so would kill me. You have not an atom of proper pride about you. Instead of directing all your energies to the maintenance of your dignity as a professional man, I verily believe you wouldn't care about turning to any common drudgery to-morrow."

"I certainly shouldn't, if my besetting sin, indolence, did not place an almost insuperable bar to my pursuit of so manly a course," said George. "I have, however, a horror of growing grey in this service, that may one day save me. It is a lamentable fact, mother, that if there be anything substantial about gentility, I have never been able to grasp it. I have always been mocked by its shadows. I walk in and out of yonder old Gray's Inn like the ghost of something gone by, or the shadow of something yet to come, and not as a creature of flesh and blood, animated by the consciousness of having a purpose in the present. I have no vocation there, no pursuit, no position. I don't know a soul in the place—I am alone in my glory; and it sometimes strikes me that gentility and idleness would have been more formidable as a primal curse than labor, from which springs all the good there is upon earth. 'I suppose the meaning of the latter was, as Byron says, 'That curse shall be forgiveness!' Certainly we should get on very badly without it."

"You are quite eloquent to-day, George, for you," said Uncle Stephen. "If you can keep up a little longer, I should like to recommend to your serious consideration the folly of shirking people in the street, or so conducting yourself that no one can make anything of you. I have observed this several times. It is as if you took your indecision into the highway, as a special protection to your gentility; or are you really modest, after all? A great deal depends upon your allowing people a right understanding in this matter."

George reddened very much.

"The truth is, uncle," he said, "I got into this habit at school, and it has grown with my growth. It had been so dinned into me that I must make none but genteel acquaintance, and gentility is so hard to be defined, that I never felt sure I was doing right. Then I believe I had a natural propensity to associating with what my mother calls inferior people; and what with trying to correct myself in this respect, and ascertaining what was exactly proper, I got hopelessly perplexed and confused."

Uncle Stephen laughed.

"Your getting into that state was your own fault, not mine," said Mrs. Ratcliffe. "I always gave you plain instructions to maintain your own dignity, irrespective of other people. If you had done that from the first, there would have been no question about your position, and no difficulty in upholding it."

"My dear mother, you don't understand it. The dignity of a school-boy is a very small matter at best, and no one cares about it. In fact, by mounting the stilts, one only insures the certainty of being brought lower than agrees even with the dignity of the miniature man. At college I had no money to compete with the rich, and the studious did not take to me. Since I entered chambers it has been still worse. A briefless barrister has small opportunity for being fussy; and the fact is, a high head don't answer with an empty pocket. As to shirking people in the street, Uncle Stephen, what's a poor fellow to do? Some of the barristers in my place, who have more work than they can attend to have established a bowing acquaintance with me; but they

will bow one day; and overlook me altogether the next. I can't look out for notice of that kind, and the predicament makes me nervous. If I see one of these big-wigs coming, I shoot out of the way, or turn back. I always had a horror of meeting acquaintances in the street, even intimate ones. It's constitutional, and I can't help it. Well, I shall not go the wrong way for loving greetings in the market-place."

"The fact is, that under an injudicious training for what you were never fitted to be, you have come to nothing, George," said Uncle Stephen. "I expect that you will rouse up some day and set yourself right. By Jove! if I could do nothing better, I'd set fire to Gray's Inn and run away by the light of it!"

"Well, I suppose I must do something desperate some day," said George. "I can't make matters worse than they are."

"I am sure you might make them a great deal better than they are by conducting yourself in a proper manner," said Mrs. Ratcliffe.

"But what, my dear mother, do you call a proper manner?"

"Why, I think you ought to throw yourself in the way of those barristers who have shown an inclination to notice you, instead of shunning them as you do in such an undignified way. Here you have been nearly two years in chambers, and you have no business, and not a single acquaintance in the place."

"Come, mother, I have one, and a capital fellow he is, too."

"A poor attorney's clerk!" said Mrs. Ratcliffe, with a sneer.

"Poor enough, Heaven knows," said George. "He has a hundred and twenty pounds a-year, and a wife and seven children to keep out of it. He was an attorney himself, remember, once, and if he had had a little more money to begin with he would not have passed the prime of his life in slaving for old Reece, who keeps his carriage, and would see him rot in a work-house."

"I wish you wouldn't use that language," said Mrs. Ratcliffe.

"No, George, be genteel, whatever you do, especially in speech," said Uncle Stephen. "As to that poor fellow, Elliott—a capital fellow he is, too, I believe—his position removes him out of the pale of your sympathy. You should certainly look higher, George, considering your position."

I saw that George in his simplicity, and Uncle Stephen out of pure malice of the sly and good-humored kind, were getting Mrs. Ratcliffe into a high state of irritation and wrath. Uncle Stephen seemed to see this, too, and he resumed at once the stern manner and authoritative tone, that seemed to me more natural to him.

"Now you understand, Eliza," he said, "that for the present Miss Marples must find a home with you. You have only to make it as pleasant to her as possible. As she has nothing better to do just now, and has some skill in needlework besides, I wish her to be replenishing her wardrobe.—You can help her here, for you have excellent taste in dress, I know, Eliza. Margaret has the money, and you must superintend her purchases. I have a deal of business on my hands, and you won't see me again till to-morrow, at dinner."

"Can't you stop with me?" said Mrs. Ratcliffe, turning to George; "you can sleep on the sofa-bedstead."

"Why, the fact is, my dear mother," said George, and he stammered, and hesitated, and blushed, "I—I—that is, having nothing to do, you know, I have been employing myself in teaching the young Elliots. You can't think how they are getting on! Henry and Lucy in French, and all the rest in writing and reading. They've quite a natural talent for learning that makes it a pleasure to teach them, and they expect me this evening, and would be so much disappointed if I didn't go. I'll stop with you to-morrow night, if you like."

"Well, upon my word, you're enough to drive one mad!" said Mrs. Ratcliffe. "I never saw anything like you!"

"Thou most veracious of fellows!" said Uncle Stephen, slapping George on the back; "I wonder if fate has in re-

serve for thee prevarication and a latch-key! Come, Eliza; be thankful for a bit of truth—a rare thing in this world! —for which I would vouch with my last breath. George might be better occupied for himself, but I know he never has any worse occupation than this. That is a great thing to say. Come, be quiet."

"I'm sure," said Mrs, Ratcliffe, putting her pocket-handkerchief to her eyes, "he might as well turn schoolmaster at once; he would then earn something, at all events."

"Not a bad idea, either; eh, uncle?" said George, who seemed all afloat about his future prospects.

Uncle Stephen laughed again, and after kissing his sister and me, walked out. George took leave of his mother and followed him, and then turned suddenly back and approached me, and held out his hand.

"I'm a very thoughtless fellow, Miss Marples," he said, "and you musn't consider me uncivil, for I believe my thick head will only entertain one idea at a time. Good-bye for the present. I hope you'll feel quite at home till we see you again."

George was evidently a generous fellow, but I could not help feeling something like contempt for him. I had no idea of a man allowing himself to be unnerved by the mere punctilios of life, while the glorious opportunities of his youth and vigor were slipping away from him unheeded.—If I were in his place, I thought, I would be something decided, if only a hewer of wood and a drawer of water.—There would have been no fear of my forming any serious attachment to him, if the resolution that strengthened within me from day to day had not put away from me every thought of the kind.

I obeyed Uncle Stephen so far as to expend upon such articles of dress as I most needed a portion of the contents of the purse he had left in my hands. Mrs. Ratcliffe, as constrainedly polite as ever, and evidently acting upon compulsion under her brother's control, accompanied me in my shopping, and readily agreed with me as to the prudence of being economical. Understanding that I had already filled the situation of governess, she supposed that her brother intended to send me out again in that capacity; and the idea

seemed to afford her so much relief that, besides not being able to guess for my own satisfaction what his intentions really were, I could not disabuse her of it. With plenty of work before me, I sat down, wondering over it what the coming days were about to bring forth.

Uncle Stephen and George dined with us every day, and both spoke of my grand-father and Aunt Betsy: of the one as daily recovering strength, of the other as being hopelessly stricken. On one occasion, when Mrs. Ratcliffe was out, I spoke to them of James Graham.

In the midst of many overwhelming troubles of my own I had neglected to answer a letter from Mr. Smithson, and to the one I had written from Mrs. Ratcliffe's house, I had received no answer. The actor did not remain long in one place, and my late communication had doubtless missed him. Time had not weakened, nor trouble diminished my affection for the dear boy, or my anxiety about him. In this interval of quiet both came back to me more powerfully than ever. I spoke to these two of my first meeting with him, of our brief intercourse and sudden parting.

"God bless my soul!" said George, in the midst of my narrative. I glanced at him as he sat with his hands clasped and his mouth open. This seemed only to be an expression of the feeling of which he was capable, and I went on.

"Margaret," he said, interrupting me again,—"may I call you Margaret?"

"To be sure," I said.

"Then, I think, Margaret," he continued, "I think I can tell you something of that boy; I think I have seen him; I think (now don't you fret), I think he is dead!"

I had my work in my hands, but I dropped it, and raised and clasped them. "Bless God!" I said involuntarily.

Involuntarily, for I had no great trust in God, but something within my spirit compelled me to feel that it was better so than that the child should still be lost in this world.

"I'm glad you take it so," said George. "I'll tell you all I know about it. Mrs. Elliott was one day out shopping, and she had a parcel to carry home. Just such a little cur-

ly-headed handsome fellow as you describe, asked if he might carry it for her. She had children of her own, and, as she afterwards said, she was unable to resist his appealing look, he seemed to be so pretty and intelligent, and so forlorn.—She took him home with her, and gave him food, and kept him with her own children till Elliott came in. He questioned him, and learned from his replies that he was quite destitute—out in the world on his own account, to get a living as he could. He said his father was dead, but begged they would not question him further about his family, as he could not say anything more. And they did not trouble him with questions, but kept him all night, and the next morning Elliott took him to the office and employed him in going errands, and I've heard him speak of the little fellow as a marvel of intelligence, and docility, and gratitude. One morning he did not come to the office as usual. Elliott made inquiries after him, and found that he had been seized with scarlatina, and conveyed to the work-house. It was in the work-house that I first saw him, for Elliott took me with him; but he was then delirious. I afterwards saw him die. He repeated all the names that you have mentioned, over and over again: Margaret and Mary, Lilly and Ellen. Margaret, he said, would tell mamma all about him; and towards the last, he said an old man with white hair was beckoning him up to God."

I wept as I never had done before, and never have done since. Real, bitter, heart-wringing grief mine was; for, besides loving the boy as I did, there was something in his spirit kindred to mine, that held us two together in the eternal tie that may not be broken, and that can only be a protracted agony to them whose trust is not strong in the Lord. I vainly wished that I had seen him once more—that I had been with him when he died.

Uncle Stephen, who had been walking about the floor, and making attempts to clear his throat, came to a dead stand.

"Now let us have done with this," he said. "If you live to be old, Margaret, you may recall this circumstance as a tender memory of the past, but at present you have no time to waste in lamentations that are altogether idle. You say

you wish to see your aunt again—now the fact is, Margaret, she has had another stroke, and is so near her end, besides being quite unconscious of everything, that I think your going quite useless. I expect to hear that she is dead, and a very happy release death would be for herself. We shall still have enough to do and think about in the world. Your grand-father has got an idea in his head that nothing I can say will drive out of it. He is determined to return to——"

"To ——!" I said, now thoroughly roused; "what will he do there?"

"His purpose is to see his brother. He thinks it right that they two, who have not exchanged a word together for nearly thirty years, should meet once before they are called away from earth, and, if possible, speak words of forgiveness and peace to one another. He hopes, too, that, in consideration of his infirmity and sufferings, and the destitution he has himself no help for, David will, out of his abundance, allow him a small annuity to supply his own few wants. It is only right that they should meet: they are brothers, and there should be peace between them: but David, the sole aggressor, is about as likely to attend to these petitions, especially the latter, as I am to fly. I have, however, said nothing to dissuade Thomas from acting as he thinks fit.—This is Friday, and on Tuesday he wishes to set out. I shall accompany him, for I have myself some business to transact at ——, which, as I told you, I quitted for good some months back. At present, there can be nothing like order amongst us; you must wait with patience till I can let you know what is to be done."

I had lately importuned him several times on the subject of the useless life I was leading; and I could obtain no more satisfactory reply than this. It seemed expedient to await the result of my grand-father's visit to ——, and to see Aunt Betsy, if so near her end, quietly laid in the earth before I rebelled, as I felt I must, if it became necessary.—Uncle Stephen must have been sufficiently acquainted with his sister's character and with mine to understand how both were punished by this juxtaposition.

My grand-father wished to see me, and I went to him.—

Uncle Stephen, who accompanied me, walked in the garden with Jem while we conversed together.

"You have been early taught, my dear child," he said, "that life is a very serious matter, even if only with reference to this brief time, with its troubles and difficulties.—You are not a novice in trouble now; you understand that it may be borne, if not overcome. It will not do for either of us to encroach further than we shall be compelled to do upon the generosity of Uncle Stephen."

I assured him of my earnest acquiesence in what he said, and of my determination to seek employment.

"I expect no less from you," he said; "I know you would not be able to endure a life of idleness and dependence, especially on such reckless liberality as Uncle Stephen's. He has been the same man all his life, lavishing what he had upon others and forgetting himself; and it grieves me to the heart that we should be this burden to him, for I know he no longer possesses the means. And the Lord has not lost sight of him, Margaret, though he now resists the teaching of the Lord. He will be remembered for his large heart; he will be gathered into the fold; I know and feel it, and the assurance gives me deep joy!"

My grand-father clasped his hands and looked upward with an expression of calm, holy trust in his eyes. I shrank into myself: how little he knew that I also had gone astray!

"As for you, Margaret," he continued, "you have learned to trust God rather than fear man, and I shall expect you to meet trial boldly. You understand for what I am going yonder. If David's position and mine had been reversed—if he had suddenly become poor, and I rich—I should have been more eager to do what I am about to do now; but, as it is, my chief motive may be misconstrued: I may not even be able to obtain an interview with him. In that case, Margaret, and in any case, if he does not consent to help me, so that I may not be a further burden upon Stephen Leath, I shall enter the work-house at ——, and end my few remaining days in it."

I uttered a cry, and started up. There were already arrows as of death, piercing my heart: I might have said,

"Why should I be stricken any more!" I resisted being beaten down further: I was inclined to say, "This is not the way to bring me back to God!"

My grand-father's distress aroused me. I relapsed into a resentful apathy that he mistook for resignation. Under its influence I was enabled to leave him quietly, understanding how we might meet again, if ever.

This was a trouble which I could not impart to so genteel a person as Mrs. Ratcliffe, neither had Uncle Stephen any idea of it, for my grand-father would not subject himself to his remonstrances. On considering the subject calmly, I could but acknowledge that my grand-father was right in the determination he had come to. It remained with myself to make another attempt at turning my acquirements or my industry to account.

And more than ever I distrusted Uncle Stephen's wisdom: my foolish dreams were dissipated, and I despised myself for entertaining them. On the second day, after my grand-father and Uncle Stephen's departure to ——, Mrs. Ratcliffe spoke to me of the latter, of his thoughtless liberality and his difficulties.

"You would scarcely believe now, Miss Marples," she said, "from the way in which my brother goes on, that he really has scarcely enough money to keep himself, without encroaching upon the small sum that he secured to me and my son, years ago. I do not murmur at his doing, that if he really needs it—of course it would be very ungrateful in me if I did—but I know Stephen so well that I should not be surprised if he brought us all to beggary together. He has been taking me to task for not buying you, or leading you to buy for yourself, expensive dresses. I reminded him that your aunt being so near death, all you could shortly require, would be a change of mourning. He had overlooked this fact altogether—and men are in the habit of blinding themselves similarly—but he has more than the ordinary thoughtlessness of his sex. Now I think you must feel that, under any circumstances, you will not require expensive dresses."

This was coming to the subject at once, and in a way that I did not at all dislike. I had reason to believe that Mrs.

Ratcliffe spoke nothing but the truth, and I was not in a condition to deal with delusions. I informed her of my determination with regard to myself, which she approved of highly. She also promised to make inquiries, and give me all the assistance in her power towards obtaining a situation, either as governess or as needle-woman in some large establishment; and with this understanding between us, we became much better friends.

CHAPTER XII.

On the fourth day after my grand-father's departure, rather late in the evening, George came in hurriedly, and asked if his uncle had been there. Mrs. Ratcliffe had gone out to tea, and I answered him.

"We have not seen anything of him," I said: "has he returned from —— ?"

"I expect he has," said George. "I waited for him yonder, and as he didn't arrive, I thought he must have come on here. I've missed him—I'll just post back."

"Is my grand-father come, too ?"

"No, I think not," said George, who had got outside the door, and seemed in a desperate hurry; "but you'll hear all about it from Uncle Stephen." And he darted off.

At about ten o'clock Mrs. Ratcliffe returned, in high good humor. She had won at cards, and it was one of her weaknesses to be greatly elated by that kind of success. I told her what George had said, and the news seemed to please her.

"Oh, then, there's no doubt but that David Marples has taken charge of his brother, as it was only his duty to do, so rich as he is," she said. "We shall see my brother in the morning, and hear all about it."

I expected to hear something very different from this; and though I had been prepared for it, I felt a strange sink-

ing of the heart. Presently a loud knock was heard at the door, and Uncle Stephen came in with George.

"My grand-father," I said, "has he returned?"

"No, he hasn't!" said Uncle Stephen. "Here, George, take my coat out with you, and your mother too; I want to talk with Margaret alone."

They went out, and Uncle Stephen sat down beside me. A sickening presentiment of something dreadful came over me; for my grand-father had promised that Uncle Stephen should write to me on the day after their arrival, and he had not done so.

"He is dead!" I said, determined to know the worst at once.

"No, he isn't," he said, "nor likely to die just yet. David Marples is dead: died just when he had no business, after leading a useless life. That's part of my news."

"Then my grand-father has not seen him?"

"Confound it! yes, he did!" said Uncle Stephen, rising up and walking about, and sitting down again: "that's what I'm coming to. Now don't you break down like a very woman, but collect all your energies, as I'm obliged to do. Your grand-father went to see his brother the day after our arrival, and not meeting with him then, he went again yesterday. He had not been gone an hour when a report reached me that David Marples was dead, and that his brother was accused of murdering him."

I did not utter any cry, but I turned sick and faint. Uncle Stephen went out and returned with a glass of water.

"Now don't be weak and nonsensical, Margaret," he said; "I've told you the worst, and your grand-father is not in any danger. "It's all stuff. David Marples has had an attack of apoplexy before: yesterday he got in a passion and finished himself off. In falling down he struck his right temple against the fender, and produced a severe contusion. Your grand-father rang the bell violently, and raised his brother's head up as well as he could; for David Marples was twenty stone in weight, and Thomas has not at present much more strength than a fly. They were found in this state. There was a poker upon the floor, with which the doctors agree that the wound upon the temple might have

been produced. Thomas was in great consternation and grief, but he gave a straight-forward account of the truth, and people affect not to believe him. Bless my life! in a town where the man's harmless and quiet character is so well known, where his piety is so well known, this is too bad. But who cares so little for piety, on its own account, as your church and chapel-goers? David Marples, with his money, and his blustering importance, and his ostentatious liberality, was the sort of man to be considered a valuable member of society. The society at —— is loud in its lamentations and demands for justice. I spoke out, and got myself insulted. Never mind, when this comes before a jury, the truth must appear. George is going to conduct the defence; and I can tell you that when he feels—and he feels strongly now—he can brighten up and speak like a man."

"And my grand-father is ——"

"Well, he's in custody, of course. He begged me to come off at once to you, and I'd a long string of pious exhortations to deliver that I forget, but which you may be able to imagine for yourself. Don't, however, fall into the vulgar error of having no self-dependence. It is almost an exploded one, and it won't do for you. Just rouse yourself up, and be determined to bear whatever may come. You may rely upon my doing my best."

If any inclination to turn to God in extremity, and acknowledge my helplessness and implore his mercy, had lingered in my heart, it departed from me now. That my grand-father should be allowed to fall into this fearful trouble at the close of a blameless life, and after so much severe suffering, scattered the remaining atoms of my faith, and I stood bare and desolate as a tree whose last leaves have been swept away by the tempest. My heart might be wrung, but I resolved not to be more the slave of circumstances than I could help; I would reserve for future action the strength that I had hitherto lavished in a useless waste of feeling.

My grand-father had begged that I might not be allowed to see him, as an interview could only be productive of additional pain to both. I could scarcely have urged such a

request, as I could only undertake the journey at a great cost to Uncle Stephen. George came in the room before his uncle left me, and held out his hand frankly, and promised me he would do his very best. He said he felt confident of success. He had brightened up wonderfully, as his uncle said he could; he who shrank from the apparition of an acquaintance in the street seemed to experience no failure of nerve at the idea of standing before an assembly of men in defence of one whom he considered to be injured.

I passed a sleepless night, for do what I would, the tide of a terrible agony swept through my soul. I did not see Mrs. Ratcliffe again till the next morning, and then she had so much the air of a martyr,—was evidently so horrified at having me in the house after what she had heard, shrank from me so perceptibly, and spoke so shortly, that if it had been possible to make me more miserable than I was, here was opportunity enough to sink me altogether. But I did not feel inclined to sink in that way. I would neither anticipate the worst, that might never happen, nor suffer myself to feel too keenly the silent but well-expressed contempt and reproach of one whose good opinion would really have been worth very little. For my own comfort as well as hers, however, I determined to rid her of my presence, if possible; and as she had said that a friend of hers promised to make inquiries for me at a large dress-making establishment in Bond Street, I ventured to ask if she had heard anything.

"Really, Miss Marples," she said, with a stare of utter astonishment, "what do you take us for? How can I give you a recommendation under present circumstances, or allow any friend of mine to interfere in your behalf? I should get myself into pretty disgrace. I assure you I have never been used to anything of this kind."

I had never been used to it either, and that was, perhaps, the reason why it had not occurred to me that, as the granddaughter of a reputed murderer, an unenviable notoriety would mark me out, go where I would. This difficulty seemed to set me fast. Fortunately, the assizes were close at hand; and as some one would have to endure my pres-

ence in the meantime, I thought the punishment might as well fall upon her as upon any one else.

I, therefore, settled quietly down to my work, and took little notice of her. I wrote to my grand-father, and had difficulty so to word what I said that he should not be shocked by any outburst of the impetuous and bold resentment that I dared to entertain against this decree of Providence, and that I found it hard to keep down. I went to see Aunt Betsy, who still lingered, several times: for Uncle Stephen and George being now busy, and rarely coming to the house, I could go in and out as I chose without exciting any notice.

When I look back upon those dark days I wonder how, having nothing better than my own strength of endurance to trust in, I got through them so well as I did. As the day of trial approached, I felt it hard that I might not be allowed to be near my grand-father, and I said so to Uncle Stephen, but he called the wish foolish, and I knew that he was going to great expense and did not need to be burdened with more. I read an account of the supposed murder in a newspaper that came to the house, and the statements made respecting my grand-father astonished me, and staggered my faith in his acquittal. It was currently reported that Mr. David Marples had been compelled to discountenance his brother, on account of the disgraceful conduct of the latter's children, and in which he had encouraged them.—Now, as my grand-father's children had all died in their infancy, except my mother, who was herself little more than a child when she died, I could not help wondering if "the children" meant herself and me, and if the disgrace, which we had small part in bringing about, was to this extent intolerable to an immaculate world. My heart burned with indignation, while my face flushed and my head bowed under this shame. I had intended to be very courageous; I had resolved to preserve my self-respect in the midst of depreciation: but my courage and my equanimity were severely tried when I came in close contact with the world and its opinion.

I never knew more of my grand-father's trial than what was told me by Uncle Stephen. He was found guilty, but

was respited, and finally sentenced to transportation for life. I passed a long interval of unconsciousness, during which I was additionally burdensome to Mrs. Ratcliffe, and a convict-ship being about to sail to Australia, I only recovered in time to be carried, like a child, to take leave of my grandfather. If I had had any remaining faith in saints and martyrs I might have looked upon him—so meek, so uncomplaining, so steadfast in his strong trust—as being both; but as it was, I only regarded him as one hardly used by a godless world, and vainly dear to myself; and my heart bled inwardly, and I relapsed, and lay for a long time between life and death.

Uncle Stephen had provided me with a nurse, and I seldom saw anything of Mrs. Ratcliffe. When I was at length well enough to go down stairs she would not remain in the same room with me. This, to do her justice, was not any horror of me individually, but rather her way of expressing disapprobation of Uncle Stephen's liberality, to the detriment of his own relations. He was compelled to notice conduct so marked that it could not escape my observation, and one evening he launched out against her in a manner that only heightened my distress.

"Confound the woman!" he said, after telling me not to mind her, "she goes to church twice on Sunday, and I don't know how many times in the course of the week, and yet she has never learned that it is expedient to show a little of what is styled Christian mercy! I've been wondering for years, what people go to churches and chapels for. Your grand-father's last request to me was, that I would not attempt to undermine your religious principles. I told him that you had strong common sense, and that in the matter of faith you would be sure to judge for yourself. My God! haven't you seen what Christians are? If you meet with a man who is a man, or a woman who is a woman, and nothing more, you may find something human about them; but the quibbles and quirks, the hypocrisy and meanness, and heartlessness, and treachery, and sordidness of pious people, floor me altogether. It was chiefly the pious people of——that floored your grand-father. The sneaking, pitiful hounds, took part with wealth and power; and when

I tried to get up a petition in his behalf, they refused to sign because the dean refused. They pretend to act under spiritual guidance!"

"And you asked the dean to sign?"

"I did. It was gall and wormwood to me, but I asked him. I would have seen him hanged before I would have asked him a favor under any other circumstances—I was driven to it, Margaret!" (He had been walking about the room, and he now stopped and struck his clenched hand upon the table.) "If your grand-father had not been tried by a jury of Christians he would now be free; for they do not judge as betwixt man and man, but according to the distinctions, that every form of religion has tended to introduce, until we have become a mass of corruption altogether."

"Uncle Stephen," I said (I was still weak, and was more fitted to receive the gentle ministrations of one of my own sex, than to enter into any contest with him or the world), "let us speak of other matters. I shall soon be strong enough to do something for myself, and you know that I cannot remain here. I am placed under the ban of a double disgrace, and I must deal with the world as I find it. Cannot I change my name and try again to earn what will keep myself? You once spoke of some plan for me, Uncle Stephen: what was it?"

"Don't drive me mad!" he said; "you see I am half mad already. Before you were born, Margaret, when I saw how my friend and his child were wronged, I vowed to devote what energy was in me to redressing them, if possible. I had a burning desire for revenge upon Colonel Leigh that has never left me, and that could not have been stronger if Alice had been my own child. This feeling made me take to educating you. I determined that you should rise in the world, in spite of the dean and his clique. I found you apt and intelligent, and as you grew up I saw that you would be beautiful. All this favored the plans I had for you. In short, Margaret, I considered it would be an easy matter to find for you a husband,—wealthy, if not high in rank—and so secure for you position and protection at once. In London I had opportunities for getting you out in good society

Well, this was my scheme: to get you married before you had seen and suffered enough to make the knowledge of your position of itself an intolerable burthen. Your grandfather frustrated this design for a time—in one respect he defeated my purpose altogether: you have suffered to an extent that has roused all the energies of your character before you have yet made a step in advance towards securing the power, without which you can only suffer on. All the powers of this world seem to be against me; here I am again foiled by this most unhappy affair of your grandfather's. But never mind: we are compelled to bear the life that is given us—we have a right to make it as tolerable as possible to ourselves. In a little time we shall see."

Uncle Stephen's scheme would, at any time, have been an impracticable one for me, though even yet he did not seem inclined to give it up. As he said, I had suffered to an extent that had roused all the energies of my character; I was too independent and self-willed to yield to dictation in matters of importance; and I, too, saw the necessity of trying to make a life like mine as tolerable to myself as was possible. There was nothing in that life that I would share with another: its difficulty, and sorrow, and shame, above which I could rise in my solitude, with a proud consciousness that I and all of mine had preserved our integrity and borne ourselves bravely, would only have been so many waves to overwhelm me, if I had sordidly attempted to barter them for position or wealth. It seemed so clear that I could only stand alone, that I could not help marvelling at Uncle Stephen's want of common foresight in thinking otherwise. Thus much of good had come out of evil, that present circumstances had rendered contention with him unnecessary.

"Just now, Uncle Stephen," I said, "I must think of the means of existence. I neither can nor will remain a burthen upon you. I would rather at present enter some dressmaking or millinery establishment, for there I could at least earn enough to keep myself, which is more than I could well hope for, in going out again as a governess; and there would be less inquiry into my connexions. Do you think you could procure me a situation of this kind?"

"There is time enough to think about that," said Uncle Stephen. "At present you are not well enough to do anything; you must keep quiet."

"I am well enough to work now," I said; "I cannot, I will not remain here. I shall never be any better while I stop here. I require some rest of mind as well as body, and I cannot rest in this state of dependence."

"You are uncomfortable enough, I know," said Uncle Stephen. "What can I say to this woman, with whose follies I have borne all my life, and whose principles I don't understand? Save me from any useless contention with her, Margaret, by keeping quiet till I have time to look about me."

I dreaded nothing so much as any contention between these two on my account. If I had been strong enough to do so, I should have looked out for myself at once; and situated as I was, I would willingly have taken the burthen and the disgrace of my presence from all of them, if possible. For a disgrace as well as a burthen I was to Uncle Stephen, too, though he would not acknowledge it. It was laying a hard task upon him, even asking him to procure me a place. I was aware of all this, and the thoughts that burned within me, kept my bodily strength down. I had busy, though as yet shapeless schemes for the future, that kept my brain in a constant state of activity; I resolved by some method or other to get the means of rejoining my grand-father, for the thought of our eternal separation upon earth, under such circumstances, was more than I could endure. Surely I had not been endowed with a bold spirit for no purpose, nor was I uselessly haunted with a conviction that I must go on at any risk towards something yet to be attained, whatever difficulty lay in my path! I felt as one who has lost his way in the dark, and feels conscious that a glimmer of light would enable him to reach the end of his journey in safety. I waited for one step forward in a fever of impatient hope.

I had seen little of George since his journey to ——, the county town where my grand-father was tried, for his sympathy was of the intense kind that distresses to the extent of embarrassing expression, and he rather shunned me; but I

thought more highly of him than ever, for many reasons. Uncle Stephen had given me an account of his eloquent appeal on my grand-father's behalf, which had obtained for him the commendation and notice of men high in the profession, and which, doubtless, had its weight in procuring a commutation of the sentence. I began to love him as a brother, not only because I felt that I owed him a debt of gratitude, but because I believed there was much that was noble in his nature; and I was grieved that there was so much on every side to interdict a free communication between us.

I had not seen Aunt Betsy since my grand-father's trial. From Uncle Stephen, who visited her frequently, I learned that she remained in the same state, and now that I was strong enough to go out, I determined to see her. I was sitting one day, expecting Uncle Stephen to come in, when George entered in evident agitation.

"Miss Marples—Margaret," he said, "are you alone in this house? is my mother gone out?"

She had gone out, as she frequently did.

"Uncle Stephen sent me," continued George, hurriedly. "He thought your firmness and gentleness would effect some good in the midst of the great distress for which we would enlist your sympathy. Will you at once accompany me on an errand of mercy? I will explain to you further on the way."

I expressed my willingness to go with him, and after hastily putting on a bonnet and shawl, I accompanied him to a coach that stood at the door. As we were driven along, he told me that his friend Elliott had that morning shot himself, and that his widow and children were as yet in too great distress to consider that they were left destitute. If any one should be inclined to think it extraordinary that I, in my brief career, should have witnessed so much human suffering and calamity, I can only say, that any one placed as I was, favorably for such acquaintance with misfortune, may see enough of it from day to day, merrily and complacently as the world seems to go on for them that know no more of the struggles and trials of poverty than is furnished by newspaper paragraphs. It would have been

odd if anything better had met my view under the circumstances in which I was placed. As regarded myself, I had been singularly fortunate in meeting with kindness. I had not suffered the worst extremity of distress.

The Elliotts occupied apartments in a street near Manchester Square. George led me into a room where I found Uncle Stephen and Jem surrounded by six children, the eldest, a boy of about ten, all except the baby crying bitterly. Jem held the baby upon his knee. I had not seen him since my late heavy trial, but Uncle Stephen had told me that his grief had been immoderate. I approached him and held my hand out.

"Oh, Miss Margaret," said the poor fellow, bursting into tears, "I can't get life out of nothin' nohow now, though there's life enough to be had, too. Somehow it all goes wrong."

I took the baby from him, and understood from Uncle Stephen that the landlady was up stairs with Mrs. Elliott, and that the dead man lay in the next room to us. I shuddered at the sight of a long towel, very much saturated with blood, lying upon a chair. George took it up and went out with it, and presently returned.

"I sent for you, Margaret," said Uncle Stephen, "knowing that you would feel for these poor children, and that you would help us as far as you could. You are scarcely in a condition to be taxed so heavily, but you see we are at our wit's end in this case. The Elliotts, like many others who have been reduced in the world, and then kept down, have no friends. Christianity provides nothing better than a work-house for desolation like this, and we wish to keep away from it, if possible. George and I are going to look over poor Elliott's papers, and see how his affairs stand; but they must be desperate. He has a brother in the country well off: but, bah! we all know what brothers generally are when poverty stands in the way. I know old Reece, Elliott's governor, for whom he has slaved these twelve years, and I'll see what can be made of *him*. Have you any money left, Margaret?"

I drew from my pocket the purse he had formerly given me. I had spent only a small portion of its contents, and

I had since wished to return it to him, but he would not take it.

"Make use of it for anything that is wanted here, Margaret," he said, "for just now I am out of money, but I expect to get some in a few days. This is altogether distressing, Margaret. Elliott's eldest child, a poor, pale, overtasked girl of fourteen, is a sewer in one of the great fiddle-faddle establishments that you want to enter. At present, she knows nothing of this misery, and we think it best to let her alone till she comes home at night. Can you stop here all night?"

I said I would.

"That's right," he said. "As to me, I'm not of much use, for I waste half my time in considering what had best be done first. Confound it! I seem to have been born for no purpose but to be a plague to myself, for as to any real good I ever did, with all my striving, where is it?"

Baby had taken a fancy to my curls, and pulling them so as to draw my head aside, I caught a glimpse of George with his arm round the eldest boy, who lay sobbing upon his shoulder.

"Come, Harry, my boy," he said, "this will never do.—You must be a man for your mother's sake. Little Frank, there, bears up better than you do."

The boy turned his swollen eyes in the direction of little Frank, who was seated on a low stool before a chair, on which his arms rested, and his face was buried in them. I fancied he had wept himself to sleep.

"Come, George," said Uncle Stephen, "we mustn't waste time now; let us see what can be done." And the two went out into the other room.

Jem had got two of the little girls upon his knees, and was trying to amuse them. I called to the third to come and kiss baby, who jumped in my arms and seemed inclined to be very happy. As to Harry, who sat helplessly in the chair where George had left him, leaning against the back of it with his hand across his eyes, I did not so well know how to deal with him. Perhaps he knew better than myself to whom to flee for consolation.

It was late in a September afternoon, and the shadows

were deepening round me, when a hurried step was heard upon the stairs, and the door was burst open, giving entrance to a very slender, pale young girl, who held in her hands a large wicker basket lined with oil-cloth, which she flung upon the floor before running up to the boy Harry.

"Oh, Harry," she exclaimed, throwing her arms round his neck, "tell me it isn't true what I have just heard down stairs—tell me it isn't true, or I shall die!"

The boy's grief was aroused afresh, and he only replied by sobbing convulsively. I beckoned to Jem to take the baby, for I thought the girl would faint. I went up to her and threw my arms round her, and for several minutes she reeled about, wringing her hands, and neither weeping nor saying anything. At length she burst into a passionate fit of weeping. What she said, and how the children began weeping afresh, and how poor Henry's frame shook as if the soul would burst out of it, I cannot take upon me to relate. When she at length became calmer she glanced at the basket.

"What shall I do?" she exclaimed. "I feel as if I could not take this now. I ran nearly all the way, that I might have time to call here for a minute and see how you all were. I did not expect ——." Here her grief burst out afresh.

"Can I take this anywhere for you?" I asked.

"Will you be so good?" she said, looking up to me. "It is a dress for Miss Wilson in Portman Square. We sat up all night with that and others. O God! I have not seen my dear, dear father, since yesterday morning!"

If I had not held her up she would have fallen to the floor. She was a slight burden, but I was myself still weak, and we staggered together. I got her to tell me the numof the house; and telling Jem I should be back presently, I went out with the basket.

By inquiring, I easily found my way to Portman Square. When I was admitted into the house a lady's-maid hurried to me, and desired me to follow her up stairs with the basket, saying as we went that Madame Campan ought to be ashamed of herself for not sending the dress sooner. In an upper passage she took the basket from me and told me to

wait, with the additional information that she expected I should catch it nicely.

I had not waited long when the maid re-appeared, and told me to walk forward. I heard as I went along a confused sound of angry voices, that assailed me altogether when I entered a dressing-room, in which I found the lady of the house and her two daughters. One of the young ladies had the dress I had brought, on; and besides being too tight in the waist it was deficient in some kind of trimming, that the three directed my attention to at once, expecting that I knew all about it.

"Whatever have you people been thinking about to treat us in this way?" said the lady of the house. "It is perfectly scandalous, and you knew the dress was wanted to-night."

"I'm sure I hate the sight of it; I could tear it all to pieces!" said the chief sufferer, giving a savage pull at the dress that seemed to me a very superb one. "I'll not wear it! I can't wear it! and I'm to be kept at home all through those dirty wretches!"

"Don't worry yourself so, dear," said the mother; "I'll never patronize that Madame Campan again, you may depend upon it. I always thought she kept an idle, dressy set of young women, that didn't know their place or care what they did. What hand have *you* had in this work?"

"Why don't you speak, you great fool!" said the other young lady, enforcing the appeal to myself, that at the moment I was too much confused to answer; "can't you open your mouth?"

O ye pampered and soft-spoken daughters of the rich! how many amongst you are capable of thus opening *your* mouths to an inferior, before whom you can make the exhibition with impunity?

I suggested that I could soon remedy the defect of fitting, and in my zeal I ventured to touch the dress which the young lady had not taken off.

"Don't come near me, you nasty, impudent thing!" she said, recoiling in horror; "go and stand by the door, do?"

"Who taught you to take such liberties with ladies?"

screamed the mother, growing redder in the face. "I'll call Madame Campan to account for this!"

"Oh, they're all a lazy, impudent set!" said the other young lady, throwing herself into an easy chair, and yawning.

"Take the dress off, love, and let that person run back with it," said the mother. "There's three hours to spare, and they must bring it back in one. Mind that!" she said to me.

This was a poor opportunity for bringing in the trouble of the young girl whose place I had taken; but after listening for several minutes to explanations about trimmings that only puzzled me, I confessed that I did not understand,—that I did not belong to Madame Campan's establishment, and I mentioned the affliction that had detained the proper messenger by the way.

"And that's the way we're treated!" said the young lady, actually bursting into tears; "we've to put up with anything because vulgar people must attend to their own troubles!"

"Why didn't you say that at first?" said the elder lady. "Get out of the house, and don't show your face here again! Watson, see her out, and take the dress to Madame Campan's yourself."

The maid seemed to be quite as much put out of her way as her mistresses, and she continued railing at me as she drove me before her. I am not sure that I did not send something like an anathema back upon the house as I walked out of it.

Thus far and no farther extended my experience of you, O women of England! It may be said that I met with extreme examples of meanness, and arrogance, and heartlessness; but while the wealthy are allowed to rise in self-defence, let the voices of faded girls and squalid women be for once heard in reply, from crowded work-rooms or cheerless garrets, or from wherever they may be allowed to congregate as machines set apart for hard use; not recognizable as human, except in their scantily-rewarded toil; not thought of in their wants, that make life a daily death; not cared for in the spiritual degeneration, for which there is no help!

The fire that was ready lighted in my spirit was fed by what I had just seen and heard, till it blazed up into a fierce flame. I was already familiar with this system, which produces tyrants and slaves of the worst description; but the contempt and insolence expressed in the words and looks of those people were more than I could promise myself to take tamely, even though they included seven or nine shillings a week as it might be, and the privilege of setting up all night to adorn sumptuous robes for my betters. I was clearly not fitted for my station; I was unfitted for Christianity, which enjoined upon me humility and forbearance, and patient waiting for the vengeance of God. I could and would protect, if not avenge myself. "I will not remain in this country!" I exclaimed passionately as I walked along; "if there be any spot of earth where the air of freedom may be breathed I will find it out. O cruel and cursed place, in which I and mine have suffered so much wrong and agony! I here trample upon your institutions which you dignify with the names of Religion and Liberty; I laugh to scorn your attempts to beat me down, till I become loathsome to myself! You shall not annihilate my intellect and then deliver me over to the privileged murderers in your mad-houses; you shall not drag me into your workhouses, and reduce me to the pauper imbecility that sinks man beneath the level of every brute that walks or crawls! I will not wear my fingers to the bone and heap the dust of death upon my heart daily, for the miserable privilege of sustaining an impoverished and degraded existence! I hate you! Oh, my God! how I hate you all, ye people who claim the admiration of the world!"

I spoke in a high tone, and I felt bold. It mattered not to me that I was poor and apparently helpless; I had all the strength of my indignation, as well as the strength of my youth and native energy, to bear me through.

Before I had reached the abode of the Elliotts I had made up my nind what course to take.

One miserable misgiving lingered with me,—I thought it quite probable that the poor slave, Lucy Elliott, might lose her situation through the wrath that I had helped to kindle in Portman Square. I told her of the dissatisfaction of the

great personages upon whom I had called, but she did not seem to heed it then; and Jem was that night despatched to inform Madame Campan on what account she was compelled to absent herself from her work.

In pursuance of the resolution I had taken, I sent Jem to Mrs. Ratcliffe, with a request that she would forward by him whatever belonged to me. As Uncle Stephen seemed to wish me to remain with the Elliotts for the present, I was enabled to do this without exciting any remark. Nothing was clearer, however, than that I had no business there, where I was only adding to the expense and doing little good. Lucy was quite capable of attending to the children, if, as the poor are compelled to do, she put forth all her energy in the midst of heavy grief; and there were women in the house, who seemed to attend willingly and sympathizing to Mrs. Elliott.

There was, however, mourning to be made, and I deferred my purpose while there seemed a chance of my being really useful. Late in the evening of the second day (an inquest had then been held and a verdict of temporary insanity returned), Lucy and I were busily at work and all the children, except Harry, were in bed, when Uncle Stephen and George came in. With all his kindness of heart, Uncle Stephen was not the sort of man to mince matters out of a regard for the feelings of those he addressed.—This he would have called an unmerciful sort of mercy, and he declared that he left all sorts of prevarication to the Christians. He and George had found poor Elliott's affairs in even a worse condition than they had expected,—there was no money, and he was, for him, deeply in debt. Old Reece, as Uncle Stephen called him, declared that he was himself a creditor, and he would not give a penny towards helping the widow and children. All the hope that remained rested upon the brother that had been written to. Uncle Stephen blurted out these facts without remorse, garnishing them with some severe comments on the injustice and inhumanity of old Reece.

"If the slave-driving curmudgeon," he said "had paid Elliott a fair salary for what he did—conducting altogether a business that yielded above two thousand a-year—nothing

could have been said. He knew that he had the man in his toils, he knew that his large family compelled him to slave on, and he took advantage of this knowledge to keep him down. He spoke to me of Elliott as he would not have spoken of a dog,—that is the worn-out man's reward. He said a hundred a-year was a princely income, and that those who could not live on it deserved to starve. He is a Methodist, and he occasionally holds forth himself, and in due time he expects to be translated to what he calls 'the kingdom.' Deliver us from a kingdom so peopled! I tell you what, George, I more than even don't care a fig for the laws, civil and religious, with which we are saddled like so many donkeys. If I met this old Reece in a convenient place, I would no more mind easing him of what I consider to be due to Elliott, than I would mind shooting down a wolf.—There is a tale—a legend I'm afraid—of one Robin Hood, a sturdy Saxon, who in the midst of Norman oppression stood boldly up for the poor of his race, and successfully levied contributions on the rich by whom they had been despoiled; and if a like career was possible in these days, in which redress is also needed, I should desire nothing better for myself."

"Uncle Stephen," said George, dryly, "you have a peculiar way of teaching the young idea how to shoot. As your plan is an impracticable one, we must turn to something else. Harry writes well; and he may be got into an office where he can do a little in that way, and run errands. You, Lucy, say that your mother has a rich uncle somewhere: what's his name?"

"Bontoft," said Lucy.

"What!" said Uncle Stephen, "the Bontoft of the firm of Bontoft and Greaves, City merchants? I knew them years ago,—both men of immense wealth."

Lucy said it was the same.

"Why, Margaret," he said, turning to me, "that's the fellow you met with. Do you think anything could be made of him?"

"I'm afraid not," I said. "He has a great dislike to the sight and sound of misery; indeed he won't believe that there is any real suffering or want in the world."

"A common complaint," said Uncle Stephen; "I wish I had the curing of it! We'll try him, however. I'll go to him myself: give me his address."

Being furnished with this, Uncle Stephen and George left us; and Lucy and I continued our labors through the night.

CHAPTER XIII.

Poor Elliott was buried decently, Uncle Stephen, George and Henry attending him to the grave. The brother of the dead man acted well—perhaps to the best of his ability.—He sent fifty pounds, and proffered to take two of the children under his charge. Nothing, however, could be made of Mr. Bontoft. There seemed to be a fair chance of the family being provided for, as George took entire charge of Henry, and Uncle Stephen proposed to establish the widow in some small way of business.

There was no pretext for my remaining any longer with the Elliotts, and I would not return to Mrs. Ratcliffe's. The members of this family all interested me greatly; and they rewarded my slight services with an excess of grateful attachment that pained me, knowing how soon and suddenly I should be separated from them, probably to meet no more in this world. On the day following the funeral I went out early, telling Lucy I should soon return. During the time I resided with the Bontofts I had heard Colonel Leigh spoken of, and understood that he lived with an uncle, a General Leigh, in Berkeley Street. I had at the time no thought of storing up the address with the view of making any future use of it; but now, when I had tried my best, and saw nothing but failures or impossibilities on every side, —now, when I had become resolute to leave these and try my fortune elsewhere, and cease to be a burden upon one whose generosity had been sufficiently tasked, I thought I had a right to ask that man's help; and I nerved myself to the undertaking.

And in the ordinary acceptation of the term, it did not require much nerve in me to do this. The great difficulty was, overcoming my strong disgust. I cared nothing for the wealth or rank of Colonel Leigh; my religious education had done me the service of levelling worldly distinctions, so that I cared nothing for power unaccompanied by such worth and honor as my own soul compelled me to look for in those who commanded my respect. I had attempted to write, but could find no words that would satisfy me: for I did not intend to supplicate or reproach, and I felt it was best that we should meet face to face.

I knew the number in Berkely Street, and I knocked boldly at the door. A porter opened it, who seemed half asleep. I saw in the hall, the leathern chair from which he had just risen. I asked if Colonel Leigh was at home.

"Don't know," said the man, looking at me from head to foot. "What's your message?"

"I want to see him on particular business, which I cannot explain to you," I said. "Will you inquire for me if he is at home?"

The porter again surveyed me in a very leisurely manner; then he told me to walk in, and he would inquire.

While I stood upon the door-mat he rang a bell, and presently a man having the appearance of a valet came down stairs. The porter mentioned my errand, and asked if his master was at home.

"I don't know, I'm sure," said the valet. "I don't think he is. You'd better leave your name and call again."

"I have no time to call again," I said; for I had seen this kind of prevarication at Mrs. Wilton's and at the Bontofts', and I felt sure that Colonel Leigh was in the house. "If you are not sure that he is out, you can at least inquire."

"What name did you say?" said the valet; and turning his face towards the porter, I saw him put his tongue in his cheek. His cool impudence, and leering look, brought forcibly back to me, the heartless horror that had preceded my birth. I felt sick with disgust. There was still nothing to dismay me further; but that loathing—how was I to overcome it?

"I did not mention any name," I said; "and I have no name to give. Tell Colonel Leigh that I wish to speak with him on a matter of life or death—that I *must* speak with him."

Perhaps my flashing eyes had some mesmeric power upon the man, for he bowed rather politely and left me. The porter sank in his chair and commenced reading a newspaper. I had been standing at least ten minutes, when the valet reappeared and told me to walk up stairs. I followed him into a narrow gallery with doors on either side. A very erect and portly gentleman, in a dressing-gown, who seemed to be upwards of sixty, honored me with a fixed stare as he walked out of the room, into which I was immediately ushered. There was a breakfast equipage upon the centre table, and Colonel Leigh, also in a dressing-gown, was seated with his slippered feet upon the fender. He rose as I entered, and, to my relief, I heard the door close behind me.

"The devil!" he exclaimed, after looking at me for a second.

"You cannot shrink from me more than I do from you," I said; "and it is in your power to make our conference very brief. I wish to leave this country, to which, if possible, I will never return. If I could have procured the means of doing this by my own labor I should not have troubled you; I already owe a large debt to one, on whose generosity I will encroach no further. I want twenty pounds; will you supply me with this sum? In return I promise, that if I can help it, you shall never see or hear of me again."

"Well, but—aw—it's an infernal bore! What you say about not being able to earn money is all stuff, if you choose to work," said Colonel Leigh, lounging over the fire and tossing his slipper from his foot and catching it.—"There's plenty to do in England, and you'll be no better off in any other country, if you're not industrious."

"I have not found work plentiful in England," I said; "at least, not such work as I can or will do."

"That's it!" said Colonel Leigh; "just what I'm told is the case all over the country. The English work-people are

too well fed, and get saucy. I have it upon good authority, from gentlemen who make a business of inquiring into such matters, that there never was a time when work of all kinds was more plentiful, or better paid than just now. It's no use telling me it isn't so, you know; I am in possession of facts."

"I have no inclination to dispute with you," I said.—"Will you, or will you not, grant my request?"

"Upon my soul, I haven't got twenty pounds about me," said the Colonel; "you might as well try to get blood out of a stone. You must not suppose that I am rich, because you find me pretty decently lodged and attended. This house and every thing in it belongs to my uncle. I have been poor all my life, and remain so.

"Then I am to understand that you refuse?"

"I didn't say that: you've a devilish cool manner, wherever you got it. In the course of a short time I may be able to send the money, if you leave me your address."

"I have no address. You speak of an indefinite future, and I have no means of existing in the present. Give me now any sum that will enable me to set my foot on the coast of France."

He had been paring his nails with a penknife; now he turned and looked at me.

"Do you speak French?"

"Yes."

"That's lucky for your present purpose, but it would have been better for you if you had been brought up to regular work. You must understand that you have no legal claim upon me. However, as far as ten pounds go I suppose I must make an effort. There," he continued, taking two notes from his pocket-book, and holding them out fluttering in his fingers; "I hope you'll make good use of it."

"If you will place them upon the table I will take them," I said. I had a horror of approaching him nearer or touching his hand.

"Oh, very well," he said, with some confusion in his manner, and he threw the notes down. I took them up and was walking out.

"Stop!" he said. "I hope you are leading a——"

He doubtless intended to say, "I hope you are leading a reputable life," but he thought better of it.

"I hope," he continued, "you will see the necessity there is for exerting yourself. There are hundreds of ways in which a young woman like you might earn an honest living. You are very handsome, too upon my soul; and if you marry honorably I may——"

I had stopped without looking back, and now I turned upon him.

"It cannot matter much to you how I live," I said.—"Marry I never shall, for I will not bring the disgrace of my connexion with you to any honorable man's hearth. I do not thank you for this help; I should not have thanked you if it had been given willingly. It will be well for you if, through the future, you can bestow as little thought upon me as I shall do upon you."

I walked out of the room and encountered the same erect, portly gentleman, who met me full in the face, and stared as before. I ran down the stairs, the porter opened the door, and I found myself in the street again. It was still early in the day, and I walked on to Piccadilly, and took an outside place in the Dover coach, that was to proceed to that place the next morning. Then I purchased a small carpet-bag and returned to the Elliotts. I packed up such few things as were most necessary, including my grandfather's Bible, which I prized for his sake. Then I selected a dark merino dress, the only one I could take with me, and such other articles of outward attire as promised to last longest. I had still much to do: I wished to see Aunt Betsy once more, and I had a long letter to write to Uncle Stephen. Lucy Elliott offered to accompany me to the work-house, and, late in the afternoon, we set out together. The work-house people had been more civil to me since the appearance of Uncle Stephen; and Aunt Betsy, now quite passive as well as unconscious, could do nothing to provoke harsh treatment. She had changed greatly since I saw her last. All her limbs were now paralysed; her features were distorted, her mouth twisted to one side, and her open eyes appeared to be fixed. The nurse told us that we did not see the worst of her; that they had been compelled to

plaster her back with lime, in order to keep the bones together. All this was horrible to me. Here was none of the peacefulness that I had always associated with the idea of death.

And the soul, the immortal soul, was it sleeping during this prostration of the flesh? Here was no more evidence of its existence than might have been found in a dying dog. I fell on my knees by the bedside, not to pray, but awed by this inexplicable mystery of my own being. I brought Aunt Betsy's life into review before me: her early spirit of independence; her disinterested devotion to her brother in his troubles; her early care of myself, ill requited; her later affection and courage, to which I owed so much. This was her reward at last,—dying as she would least have liked to die—a pauper, make the best of it we could, with only strangers to close her eyes, and unable to recognize those she loved if they might be present with her. I could make nothing more of it than this as I rested my face upon the already dead hand and kisssed it with the passionate, but hopeless, affection of earth. As my burning tears trickled through the cold, inanimate fingers, I remembered the uselessness of my grief. I dashed them away with a sort of disdain, and kissing the distorted mouth, I took a last look and walked out.

I was writing my letter to Uncle Stephen in the evening when he came in. Lucy was up stairs with her mother, whom I had not yet seen, and I was alone. I hurried my papers away and welcomed him: I was really glad to see him once more.

"For an old bachelor," said Uncle Stephen, throwing himself into an arm-chair, "I am about as much bothered as a man can well be who has not a dozen children all going the wrong way. I have just discovered, Margaret, that George is a most undutiful dog."

"I hope not," I said; "I am sure not: you are joking."

"I'm in no humor to joke, for I shouldn't wonder if you too, turned rusty on my hands. Do you think you owe me any obedience, Margaret?"

This was a startling question, at a moment when I was about to wrench myself away from all authority. I had at

no time, however, been more inclined to feel and acknowledge how much I owed to this early friend.

"There must be something very wrong about me if I have led you to entertain a doubt upon the subject," I said; "but, oh, Uncle Stephen, my obedience, like everything else, can only make me a further burden upon you: I cannot bear this."

"You are a silly child? What do you suppose a fellow like me has to live for, if he has no interest in life beyond himself? If I hadn't you and George to think about, what would become of me? Mind, though, I don't bargain for being plagued in the wrong way. First, with respect to George; the fellow has taken it into his head to fall in love."

This appeared to me a very foolish procedure, considering George's circumstances. I thought he would be better employed if he roused himself out of his lethargic state, and struck out a new path for his exertions, and commenced in earnest the struggle for independence.

"If he is serious," I said, "I hope the lady is rich."

"What a mercenary thought, off-hand! To do you credit, Margaret, you never had much romance about you; how should you, poor child! George has had little to do, except dream, all his life. He has had no real trouble, and a natural indolence has inclined him to take everything easy.—Now, however, he is brightening up wonderfully. He has conceived what I call a sublime idea—he wants to go out to Australia."

"Ah! he will see my grand-father!" I exclaimed.

"Of course he will! So will his wife; so shall I: for if he marries and expatriates himself, I shall certainly follow, so soon as I can settle my affairs; taking my sister with me, if she will go; and if not, providing for her here as genteelly as possible. Could you part with us all so, Margaret?"

I had nerved myself up to the parting with them all, but not in this way. It was easier work to wring other hearts than bear this wringing of my own. I wondered if Uncle Stephen could really so leave me.

"What a blank look!" he said, approaching me, and

placing his hand upon my head. "Did you think for a moment that we had not included you in our scheme? Why, Margaret, we couldn't live without you, neither George nor I. Look here! what do you call this—a love-ditty?—Confound all verse-makers! I'm such a prosaic fellow myself, that if the lines hadn't been addressed 'To Margaret,' I should have been inclined to throw them behind the fire. I found them in George's desk; and upon interrogating him, I learned that he had dared to disobey my injunctions by falling in love with you!"

I glanced at the lines placed in my hand addressed "To Margaret," with a feeling approaching to terror. I could not have chosen George for a husband, even if no such obstacle had stood in the way as the mental resolve, respecting which I had no wish to speak.

"O, Uncle Stephen!" I said, "you cannot wish that *I* should marry George?"

"Can't I?" he said. "Well, I didn't a short time ago, when I thought you might do better; but as matters have turned out, and if you can put up with him—and he's a fine fellow at heart, Margaret—I desire nothing better. He has no energy of his own, except by fits and starts, and you would make a man of him. Your union would reunite us to your grand-father. I don't intend to hold this out to you as a motive, Margaret, because your decision must come from your own heart, and be unbiassed. I only want to prove to you that George has my best wishes. Now, don't screw up your mouth to answer *me*. *I*'m not making love to you. To-morrow, George will see you himself, and you can talk it over together. I must bid you good-night, for I have a deal to do, and had no business to be here so long."

"Oh, stop one minute, Uncle Stephen!" I said. (How much harder this had made our parting!) "Everything you say, makes me appear to myself a monster of ingratitude, and yet I am not ungrateful; everything you have done for me in the past crowds upon me now, and overwhelms me. I love you dearly, Uncle Stephen; I would do anything to please you; anything to prove my gratitude and my sense of the duty I owe you; anything that I *could* do! Remember that I have said this; for, oh, it is true!"

"What is the matter with the child?" said Uncle Stephen, coming back and taking my hands, which, in my excitement, I had held towards him. "Do you think I should wish you to do anything that you *cannot* do? Come, know me better, and trust me altogether as a friend, the same to-morrow as to-day, happen what will. Compose yourself, now. Bless you! bless you!"

I threw my arms round his neck and returned the warmest caress he had ever given me, and then I found myself alone.

And then I tore up the letter I had commenced, and began another. I wrote to George, too; such a letter as a sister might write to a beloved brother on the eve of an eternal separation: but neither satisfied me; how should they? I had said so much from which so little that I felt could be understood.

I had resisted two strong temptations,—an uninterrupted union with those I loved well, and the prospect of soon meeting with my grand-father. I could not help it. I had no affection to return for that proffered me by George: I was firm in my resolve to battle with life alone. I might only be going to my own destruction; but an irresistible impulse urged me on, and I felt that it was impossible for me to act otherwise.

I felt that Jem, as well as Aunt Betsy, would be kindly looked to by those I left behind me; and I passed a sleepless night, thinking of them all, though I tried to avoid thought, shrinking from the idea of the distress I was leaving where I would willingly have left peace. I slept with Lucy Elliott, and I did not tell her until we were about to retire for the night that I should have to rise early in order to proceed on a journey. She expressed surprise and regret, but did not question me closely, and I left to her care the letters for Uncle Stephen.

I had one brief doze, from which I started with a sudden exclamation of pain and terror that awoke my companion. I had been dreaming that my heart was rent in twain; that I had it in my hand, and was looking at it; and that its throb, like the beat of a sledge-hammer, shook my whole frame. I awoke with an agonizing pain in my heart; for

several minutes I fancied I was dying; and then I promised myself, that if I recovered I would never again allow myself to feel with an intensity that, besides doing no good threatened to defeat all my purposes.

"Be something decided," I said, mentally, apostrophising myself; either lie down and break your heart in earnest, or bear up with the true courage without which nothing can be done!"

Against my wish, Lucy rose early to make me some breakfast, and I took leave of her as if only for a short time. She wished to carry my carpet-bag, but I would not let her, and walked out by myself in the gray dawn. I found the coach ready to start, and it was not until I had left London behind me that I breathed freely. When, at half-past two in the afternoon, I found myself on board the steamer that conveyed me away from England altogether, my spirit bounded with exultation in the midst of my regrets.

I remained upon deck all the way. The sea was rough, and there was a high wind. This tumult of the elements was congenial to the mood of my mind. I was not at all sick, and my enjoyment of a scene so novel to me was uninterrupted. In one respect I had won the wild liberty for which I had panted in suffocating rooms, peopled by the pariahs of society—the poor and hard-tasked, the neglected, and despised, and afflicted; abodes approached only by contempt or pauper help; whose monotony was only broken by fresh calamity or death. I was poor as ever, but poverty had ceased to appal me; life was bounding in my heart, and I had high hopes that I should never again be beaten down as I had been; that, however hardly I might be compelled to labor, I should enjoy some of the privileges of a human being in the land of my adoption.

There were several passengers, and one aristocratic family had a carriage on board. This family, which consisted of an English earl, his two sons, and a daughter, accompanied by several livery, servants, valets, and a lady's maid, seemed to attract considerable notice. They remained chiefly upon deck, pacing up and down. As I sat, I could not help noticing the contrast betwixt the eager looks of the plebeians

—showing, I thought, in some, a servile adoration that would have well liked to fall down and worship them; in others, a puerile admiration, mixed with much humility; in others, mere passing curiosity—and the evident obliviousness to everything around them in these great ones of the earth. Occupying one seat all the way, I saw enough to make me marvel at the great dreath of self-respect which there is in the world, notwithstanding that every one possessing the power is well enough inclined to make his own importance felt wherever it is convenient to do so. I managed to preserve my equanimity, for great misery is a pervading presence, and a strong resolution will chain the soul, compelling it to the contemplation of the purpose that lies before it. But I could not help thinking how all present would shrink away from me if they knew who and what I really was—the daughter of one who would not or could not own me; the grand-daughter of a convicted murderer; the niece of a pauper dying in a work-house. I was all this, yet I said, "Thank God that I am nothing worse!—that I do not feel the less fitted for playing an honorable part in the world!"

We arrived in the harbor of Calais. I kept my seat until the bustle occasioned by the departure of the greater people had subsided. When I walked out upon the pier I was assailed by several porters, who wanted to carry my luggage; but I had no particular place to carry it to, and said I did not need their services. A custom-house officer stopped me, took my carpet-bag, and poised it on his finger.

"Parbleu!" he said; "is that all?"

"All."

"Mademoiselle is alone?"

"Yes, alone."

He led me into the Custom-house, and while a woman was searching my carpet-bag I missed my purse, which I had kept in my dress pocket. It contained all I had, except a few shillings lying loosely in the same pocket, and was the remainder of the ten pounds given me by Colonel Leigh. O ye who a bound in money, and squander it heedlessly, how can you enter into the feelings that overpowered me when I discovered this great loss? What was I to do,

friendless, and in a strange land, for I knew that money was needed everywhere?

The woman perceived my disorder, and I acquainted her with my misfortune. She advised me to return to the ship, where I might have dropped it, or to give information to the police. I ran back to the ship, and there was a search that produced nothing; than a crowd gathered round me; then I was questioned by the police. The result of it all was that I was left to shift for myself as I could.

For though the police promised to make strict search for my missing property, I had small hope of recovering it, and in the meantime I knew not what to do. An old fishwoman, who had stood listening with a basket of herrings on her head, accosted me as I was walking away.

"Mon Dieu!" she exclaimed, "what will you do, poor child? Where are you going?"

I turned to this voice of sympathy.

"I don't know what to do, or where to go," I said, replying in her own language. "This is a sad misfortune for me."

"Sacristie! come with me, then," said the woman.—"Everybody knows me, Mere Meulen! Holy Virgin! we are all Christians, and you're not to be left to want. Come on."

I followed her very willingly, and we entered the town. After passing through a fair, wide street, she dived into a narrower one, and set her basket down at a door, beside which stood a young man, very jauntily dressed, though evidently of her own class.

"Jaques," she said addressing him, "carry mademoiselle's luggage up to my room, and see there's a good fire.—Where's Petit?"

Jaques put his head down a cellar outside and whistled, and a ragged urchin about twelve years old made his appearance.

"Here, Petit," said mother Meulen, "take this basket to Madeleine, and tell her I sha'n't be out again to-day. Now be quick back, for I want you: do you hear?"

"You speak so loud, mother Meulen, one can't help hearing you," said the boy. "You see if I don't fly."

Mother Meulen laughed. She had taken some of the finest fish out of the basket. She desired me to follow her up stairs. Jaques had preceded us with the carpet-bag, and we found him in a room at the top of the house, where he was busily heaping wood on the fire. Mother Meulen, with great volubility, gave him an account of my misfortune.

"Fi, donc! what a jade Ill-luck is!" he said, turning his handsome face to me. "Never mind, there's worse crosses at sea than that. Perhaps mademoiselle was going further?"

"I intended to have proceeded to Paris," I said.

"You see, Jaques," said my protectress, "we must help mademoiselle."

"True, true," said Jaques; "we must and we will. Sit here, mademoiselle, while I make the coffee. Marie will broil those fish for you, mother Meulen."

"So she will," said mother Meulen, and approaching the inner wall she knocked at it. Presently a brisk, bright-eyed grisette, entered the room.

"Do you want me, mother Meulen?"

"You must broil these fish for us, Marie; you see we have company."

Marie took them and tripped out again, and by the time that mother Meulen had spread a clean cloth upon the table, and furnished it with bread and other requisites, and Jaques had prepared the coffee, she returned with them cooked very delicately; and looking to me (for I was very hungry, notwithstanding my disaster) quite a treat.

The greatest treat of all, greater even than Jaques's coffee, which mother Meulen assured me was superb, was the cheerful faces and lively manners of these three. Poor they were, no doubt, but poverty had not crushed out the gaiety of their hearts; and they possessed true independence, for there had been no hesitation in any of them about giving up time, or affording other help to myself. Ah, my God! what an important matter half-an-hour of time was to me when I worked for less than sixpence a-day! I wondered what that bright-eyed Marie was, in whose face there seemed to be so much irrepressible glee, and who skipped about as if she were sat on wires. She did not look like a

vender of fish, no disparagement to mother Meulen—God bless her, wherever she is !), and I ventured to make the inquiry during our repast.

"Marie!" exclaimed Jaques, perhaps not understanding my inquiry; "Marie is the best dancer in Calais. She sings, too divinely. You should hear her."

"Marie," said mother Meulen, "is a very good girl. She helps to keep her mother, who is an invalid. She is a dressmaker, and her brother is a fisherman, like Jaques there.—He's a wild young fellow, and helps others to spoil her. But what's the use of talking when one grows old? When I was young I was as gay as Marie myself. Some of these days she'll marry, and if I had a son I would not wish him a better wife."

I had been thinking that Jaques was her son, but in the course of the evening she undeceived me. Jaques was the betrothed of her daughter, who lived in service sixteen miles off. They were to be married in a week, and in two days he was to set out to fetch her. In the meantime he seemed inclined to make a holiday of it.

It was very well to make myself comfortable with these hospitable people for a day or night, but I could not remain here; and what was I to do next? Mother Meulen and Jaques wished me to remain till something was heard of my purse; but, though I was sure I had it on board with me, I did not feel any hope of getting it back again. I thought I could not do better than explain how I was circumstanced to these people, and ask their advice. I told them that I was an orphan and alone in the world, and that I had come to France in the hope of obtaining an engagement, as teacher of English, in some school or family.

"There is a convent that is also a school, only three miles from the chateau where Lisette lives," said Jaques. "Mademoiselle might try there."

"Ah, yes?" said mother Meulen, clapping her hands; "and if she didn't succeed you could bring her back with you."

Jaques was to proceed to Clerons, the name of the village and chateau, in a light cart, and as Clerons was on the road to Lille, and Lille was on the road to Paris, I thought I

could not do better than go with him. Somehow I had no fear of being left quite destitute in the vicinity of a convent.

Thus, then, it was arranged. I slept two nights in mother Meulen's room, and in the meantime Jaques could gain no tidings of my purse. As I had no intention of returning to Calais, I disabused mother Meulen of the idea that I might return with Jaques.

"Then, *ma foi!* you will take money with you," said mother Meulen, taking a leather purse out of her pocket. "Come, don't be frightened; I haven't been slaving all my life for nothing; I can help my neighbors sometimes: can't I, Marie?"

This was said on the morning just before Jaques and I set off, and Marie was present.

"You can, mother Meulen; and you do. You are a good soul," said Marie, "and you set a good example to us."

"Just hear her!" said mother Meulen; "that's the way she comes over all of us: flattering one, wheedling or tormenting another, till she has it all her own way."

Marie shook her curls, and laughed merrily.

"But mademoiselle must consider," said mother Meulen. "It won't do to travel without money. From Clerons to Paris is a long way."

"But from Clerons to Lille?" I said. "I might find employment at Lille."

"Lille is a fine city, and you might," said mother Meulen; "but you will want money to take you to Lille, and when there you will have to look about you. What nonsense this is! you are only borrowing, and you will pay me again. Haven't I a daughter of my own, and can't I feel for you?"

"Mademoiselle," said Marie, "if you don't oblige mother Meulen, she'll be quite miserable; so shall I, if I'm compelled to think of you far off, and without money. You see how the case stands?"

So to oblige them, and myself at the same time, I took sixty francs from mother Meulen,—all I would take, though she pressed more upon me. Then I took an affectionate

leave of them, promising to write, and mounted Jaque's light cart—rather a heavy one—and shortly left Calais behind me, and entered the open country of France.

I missed the luxuriance that speaks to the eye in England—the trim meadows and cosey-looking homesteads, the hedge-rows, and groves, and woods that there meet one everywhere. To make up for this—which, however, I did not care about—Jaques was a most entertaining companion, giving me his whole history, which, though very eventless, had much human interest in it, and pointing out to me every object of attraction on the road. We passed several clusters of houses, and Jaques exchanged hearty greetings with individuals of both sexes, seeming to be well known all along our route. When we arrived at Clerons he put up at a small inn, the landlord of which came out to us. He was a thin, wiry, little man, upwards of sixty, but he addressed himself to me first, with all the politeness of his nation.

"Will mademoiselle allow me to help her? Is this all mademoiselle's luggage? Walk forward! Madame Beton will be quite delighted, I'm sure. Ah, Jaques! what sad havoc thou art about to make at the chateau yonder! Antoine has had one trial with charcoal—that wouldn't finish him; and now he threatens to shoot himself."

"Nonsense!" said Jaques, laughing. "Mother Meulen's daughter is no coquette, and I understand your jokes. Now, never mind me; I want you to attend to this young lady."

Madame Beton—at least three times as large as her husband—received us at the door; me politely, and Jaques very heartily. I was ushered into a room with a stone floor; and a repast, consisting of fritters, sweet pancakes, very hard cheese, and a light wine was speedily placed before me.

Jaques remained in an outer room, in which I heard him conversing with the host and hostess. Presently he came to me.

"I'm at mademoiselle's service," he said; "I promised mother Meulen that I would drive you over to the convent as soon as you liked to go. There's plenty of time to look after Lisette."

Plenty of time to look after Lisette! Had he no fear of Antoine before his eyes?

"Ah, Jaques," I said, "you must not neglect your bride; and mother Meulen did not understand that, in the first instance, I wished to write to the superior of the convent. I shall do this to-day, and call to-morrow; so, you see, I need not trouble you,—which, indeed, I should be ashamed to do on such an occasion. Will you return here, and shall I see Lisette?"

"Yes, mademoiselle," said Jaques, "the château is just behind yon hill," and he pointed from the window; "we must pass this road, and Lisette will call to take leave of her old friends. But is mademoiselle sure that I cannot do her this service to-day?"

"Quite sure, Jaques. You shall take my love back to mother Meulen and Marie, and tell them that I now have no fear of getting on. I shall think that you are not very desperately in love, Jaques, if you loiter with me any longer."

Jaques bowed, smiled, colored a little, and left the room. Presently I saw him walking at a quick pace towards the hill. His errand might almost have been guessed from the buoyancy of his step. Ah! it is a blessed thing to feel that human hearts *may* sometimes be light and happy. I stood looking from the window, forgetting my own troubles, and picturing to myself the meeting of the betrothed lovers.

Madame Beton came in with some fruit, and I took the opportunity of making some inquiries respecting the convent.

"The nuns are of a strict order," said Madame Beton, "and they are very poor. They devote themselves to the instruction of young girls, whose poverty prevents them paying for education. It is not the sort of school that would require teachers that have to be paid for. Mademoiselle would succeed better at Lille."

I inquired how it would be possible for me to proceed to Lille."

"This is an out-of-the-way place for conveyances," said Madame Beton. "Robert Durand will pass to-night with

his wagon, but he only goes as far as Mouscron; but from Mouscron you could easily get on to Lille."

I made up my mind to proceed by this conveyance. Presently Jaques returned, with Lisette. He presented her to me, I thought, with an air of pride, that increased my surprise at finding her plain, though the expression of her countenance and her manners were very pleasing. He was much handsomer, as a man, than she was as a woman; but the devotion seemed to be chiefly on his side. Hearts are sometimes to be won by qualities that rank far above the ephemeral advantages of mere outside prettiness, and Jaques Rebaud had, doubtless, secured for himself a good wife.

Jaques had evidently been talking about me, for Lisette in her quiet, respectful way, manifested a strong interest in me and my fortunes.

"But you, Jaques, and mother, to think of our convent for mademoiselle!" she said. "Why, the lady superior herself lives upon black bread, vegetables, and water, all the year round, except on festivals, when they have a little fish. If mademoiselle could only get to Paris!"

I told them that I designed going first to Lille, and then mentioned my intention of proceeding to Mouscron in Robert Durand's wagon.

"How uncomfortable for you!" said Lisette; "he travels in the night, and is so slow. Ah! I remember something —how lucky!"

She went into the outer room, in which stood several boxes. They were her own, and had been sent on before her. She unlocked one, and brought from it a pillow covered with black leather.

"Monsieur le Baron gave me this," she said; "but I have no use for it. You will find plenty of straw in the wagon, and with the help of this, you may be able to sleep."

It was in vain that I resisted taking it; and in the midst of our contention Madame Beton carried it off, saying she would see to its being placed in the wagon herself.

This excess of kindness, to which I had not been accustomed from strangers, touched me even to pain. My poverty and destitution seemed only to increase the respect

which they considered due to me. When or where in England had I met with anything like this?

A man and woman, two of Lisette's fellow-servants, had arrived with her and Jaques; and during the short time that she remained at the inn, she and Jaques had to divide their attention betwixt these persons, who remained in an outer room, and me. During a moment when we were left alone, Lisette drew out her purse.

"Will mademoiselle oblige me by borrowing a little more?" she said, timidly. "You would make Jaques and me so happy. Mademoiselle does not know how expensive traveling is."

I was resolute about refusing this further help, but I had a difficulty in restraining my tears. This young girl, her mother, and Jaques, were not at all extraordinary characters: the distribution of the Montyon prizes has made us acquainted with many such.

When the hour of parting came, I again commended myself to mother Meulen, and promised to write. Lisette held out her hand, and looked as if she would have liked to kiss me. I threw my arms around her neck, and we both burst into tears. Tears were still blinding my eyes when, after shaking hands with Jaques, I watched them both depart from the window. They frequently looked back and kissed their hands, and I stood till they drove out of sight.

It was early in the month of October, and the weather being very fine, I took a stroll in the neighborhood while it yet remained daylight. There was not much to admire in the scenery if my reflections had not shut it out. Try as I would to fix my attention upon the future, thought, like loose quicksilver, shot in all sorts of directions, and mocked my control. Now I was with the dear, innocent, old man upon the sea. Would he live to reach the place of his destination? would he there be tasked too hardly? would he be allowed to die in that far land, alone and desolate, save for his strong trust in God? Ah! there must be something in the trust that remained unshaken amid trial like this! Now I was with Aunt Betsy, wondering if she was dead or alive: now with Uncle Stephen and George. I had given them no clue by which they might guess whither I had gone.

I had promised to write when I had achieved independence. How long should I have to wait before I could do this?

It was eight o'clock in the evening when the wagon drove up to the door. I heard Madame Beton bargaining about my fare to Mouscron, which proved very moderate. Then she came to tell me that I should have some fellow-travelers, who seemed to be very merry. Indeed, I had already heard the strains of a fiddle proceeding from the wagon, and I was somewhat alarmed about the company I should fall into.

"It's only José, the Savoyard," said Madame Beton.—"He's a gipsy, to be sure, but he's a harmless, good-natured fellow; and there's two women with him, gipsies too: you'll find them quite respectful, mademoiselle."

I did not hesitate any longer. Madame Beton said I had nothing to pay; and she placed in my hand a small covered basket, which she said Lisette had brought for me from the château. There was nothing for it but to receive these added obligations complacently; and taking a kind leave of my host and hostess, I mounted the wagon.

There was plenty of straw in it, as Lisette had said. My pillow was placed against a pile of packing-cases, and I was removed a few paces from my three companions, who were revealed to me by the light of a horn lantern swung from the wagon roof. José was seated with his fiddle in his hand. He was quite young, and his countenance had a wild gaiety about it that corroborated the character given me of him by Madame Beton. His two companions were young also, and all three possessed the large dark eyes, and glossy black hair, and swarthy complexion of their race. Presently we heard the voice of the driver, Robert Durand, urging the horses forward, and the bells hung at their heads kept monotonous time to their slow onward march.

The gipsies spoke together for some time in a language I did not understand. At length José said:—

"Has mademoiselle any objections to music?"

"Not at all," I said. "Pray, don't let me be an interruption to you."

For several miles José went on scraping his fiddle, to the music of which the girls occasionally sang. Their clear voi-

ces and wild melodies had a pleasing effect in the still night, and reflection was lulled as I sat listening. At length they began to converse together again; and then one of the girls raised herself up and turned to me.

"Will mademoiselle let me tell her fortune?" she said.—"I can see by her face that she is to be fortunate, but I must look at her hand."

"I have no faith in palmistry," I said; "and if I had, I am too poor to pay for a peep into the future."

"Then I'll tell your fortune for nothing," she continued. "Don't you think that we who can look back as well as forward may sometimes find a pleasure in searching into the destinies of those we meet? Come, you have interested me; let me see your hand."

"I have no faith, remember," I said, as I gave my hand.

José unhooked the lantern and held it down as the girl commenced her inspection.

"It is a soft hand to tell of such a hard life," she said.—"But the trial is nigh past, and what a future here is! You will rule over many, and will fix an empire in a strange land."

"Then I shall, perhaps, go to Australia, and become queen of the territory," I said to myself. "What nonsense!" I laughed.

"Ah! you don't believe!" said the girl. "I see that your future husband is waiting for you—wearying for your coming."

"There you prove yourself at fault," I said, snatching my hand away. "There are reasons why I cannot marry if I would."

"Why, mademoiselle cannot be thinking of turning nun? The fates are against such a sacrifice."

"That is true enough," I said. "I have much to do before I shall think of burying myself in a nunnery."

"Good," said the girl. "You are going on and you cannot help it. Remember what I have told you in years to come."

I reclined back upon my pillow. The two girls seemed to compose themselves to sleep, and José nodded as he sat with his arms folded. I lay wondering what I should do

when I arrived at Mouscron. It would be so early in the morning that scarcely any one would be up. Seeing at length that the bright eyes of the gipsy girl were fixed upon me, I asked her at what hour she thought I could procure a conveyance to Lille.

"To Lille!" repeated the girl; "are you going to Lille?"

"Who's talking about Lille?" said José, starting up.

"Mademoiselle is going there," said the girl.

"If you don't mind going in our company, we'll convey you there free from cost," said José. "You might fare worse, even in a diligence."

This was an offer not to be neglected in the state of my finances. I accepted it with thanks, and when the wagon stopped, got out with my companions. Day had just begun to dawn, and we seemed to be standing in an open road surrounded by waste land. In the distance I thought I saw a clump of trees.

"We don't go on to Mouscron," said Jose, "for our people lie near here. Now, Morgotte, be nimble-fingered; and, Luce, run and see to lighting the fires."

Morgotte, the girl who had told my fortune, handed our luggage from the wagon, while Luce disappeared. José having little luggage of his own, carried mine, and in this fashion we set off in the direction taken by Luce.

This was not a very auspicious commencement of a career so brilliant as that which had been predicted for me. That I had associated myself with a thorough band of vagabonds became plain to me, now that I had a full-length view of my companions by daylight. Their ragged but picturesque attire, the wild freedom of their manner and looks, the savageism about them altogether, made me already regret having acted so hastily, and filled me with apprehensions. They might be decoying on purpose to rob, perhaps to murder me. Then I considered what Madame Beton had said respecting José, and that there was certainly nothing like ferocity about him. Finally, a growing inclination for adventure, and the knowledge that I had compromised myself for the present, tended to reconcile me to the course I had taken.

CHAPTER XIV.

I ACCOMPANIED José and Morgotte, and at the distance of about half a mile we came upon a large gipsy encampment. The people were all astir, and there seemed to be a swarm of them, men, women, and children. There were two wagons, besides several mules grazing, about, and a large tent from which a number of half-naked urchins peeped out. Beside one of the two fires a wrinkled old crone sat smoking a short pipe; Morgotte took me up to her, and introduced me in her own jargon, adding "mademoiselle will travel with us to Lille."

The old woman lifted her bleared eyes to take a view of me, and then grunted out something that did not sound very like a welcome. I had never seen anything so hideous in human shape before; besides that, there was something really diabolical in her countenance. The men and the rest of the women were not all an improvement upon José and his companions, and I began again to be troubled with misgivings. I was presently called to partake of the contents of two huge iron pots that had been swinging over the fires. I was accommodated with a basin and a spoon, the rest eating out of the pots as they could. This morning repast was a species of soup, composed chiefly of vegetables; but there was a mixture of some kind of meat in it, and it was not at all unpalatable. After breakfast there was a consultation among the men, and then a general saddling of mules; and then, to my disappointment, the men rode off, leaving us behind them. Morgotte and several of her companions also left us,—the former told me, to try their fortunes at Mouscron. She said her people would not

remove to Lille till the evening. All the day I amused myself as well as I could with the children and with watching the ways of these wild people. The women who remained employed themselves in washing and hanging out clothes, or in sitting down and mending them. I did not observe any one amongst them to whom the rest paid respect except that hideous old woman, who always seemed to have a pipe in her mouth, and who watched me wherever I moved to. At dinner-time I opened my basket, and found in it a cold roasted fowl, a loaf of white bread, and a bottle of wine. I asked the others to partake with me, and the old woman, who had her full share of the wine, pronounced it to be very good.

It was growing dusk when we at length mustered together, and set out for Lille. The women and children were mostly packed in the wagons, and José asked me if I could proceed on one of the mules. I had never tried that mode of travelling, but I was willing to venture a good deal to avoid being half suffocated in the wagons. With José at my side, and with Morgotte and others to set me an example, I got on very well; and I was not at all sorry that our march was to take place in the dark. It was cheerless enough when we at length again encamped near Lille; but bright fires were soon blazing round us; the tent was again erected, and a supper similar to the breakfast prepared. Morgotte spread a blanket for her and myself to sit upon; the old crone crouched near us with the pipe in her mouth, and holding her withered hands to the blazing fire. The children had been put to bed, and round the two fires the whole company of men and woman had gathered. Both Morgotte and José had informed me that we were close upon Lille, and that I could easily walk there in the morning. Being now free from my apprehensions, and as nothing could be done that night, I was glad to remain where I was, with the knowledge that I should have the day before me.

These wild people, to whom I now owed a debt of gratitude, inspired me with much interest. Wanderers as they were, living and lodging hardly, they seemed to be a sturdy race, and, except in the use of tobacco, there seemed to be no intemperance amongst them, the men chiefly drinking

water. To judge from their eager emphasis and wild gesticulations as they spoke, they seemed to have enough of native spirit to sustain them. I wished that they had conversed in a language that I understood. I should have liked to know what were the plans they seemed to be discussing so eagerly; what objects of interest attracted them in this gregarious life; whether they had any wish or hope beyond it. I had, besides, a lurking sympathy with these self-made freemen, who would not be shackled with the conventionalisms of the world.

By the flickering light of the wood fire, these wild faces and extended figures became again invested with the romantic picturesqueness that daylight more than half robbed them of. I was thinking that as we sat we might supply material for a grand picture, when José whom I had missed for some time, approached, tuning his fiddle.

"Room there for M. de Beausset!" he cried; "room for the gipisies' friend!"

There was an instantaneous starting up of men and women.

"Keep your seats, and be hanged to you!" cried M. de Beausset; "why do you startle us in that way, like a flock of frightened geese? Ah, Morgotte! I'll come and sit by you, and you shall tell me my fortune again for I'm quite losing heart. The world uses me very scurvily, Morgotte."

"That must be your own fault, monsieur," said the girl, by whose side he had thrown himself. "You have youth, health, wealth, and—and you are talented and handsome. It is not such as you that the world is inclined to use so."

"Now what's the use of flattering a fellow, and making him look like a puppy?" said M. de Beausset. "What advantages are there in circumstances that place out of one's reach the true elixir of life? I tell you I'm *ennuied* to death, Morgotte. Am I not compelled to come to you in order to be able to live at all?"

A deep sigh from Morgotte caused me to turn and look at her. She was sitting with, her head bent down, beating her fingers together. I caught a glimpse of the very handsome face and elegant figure of M. de Beausset. José

struck up a merry tune, to which the younger gipsies, male and female, commenced a wild but not ungraceful dance.—When it was finished, Luce and two or three others danced singly. Morgotte still remained seated beside me.

"How is this, Morgotte?" said the new-comer; "it is unusual to see you seated, and so silent, while the dance is going on. Have you had a quarrel with Jose?"

The girl started up with a bound. Disappearing for an instant, she returned with a pair of castanets, and keeping time to her own movements, she performed a variety of figures with a rapidity and a wild grace that compelled both attention and admiration. The dancing went on, intermixed with singing; and in the meantime M. de Beausset, in the absence of Morgotte, seemed inclined to address himself to me.

"This is a wild, free life," he said; "does it possess any charms for you?"

"None that are dangerous," I replied. "This is not the sort of freedom I covet."

"You have some sense, I see; though, perhaps, you have not always made good use of it," said M. de Beauset. "Let us converse in your own language; Jose has told me how you met. You must not be offended at my telling you that the sooner you break off this connection the better."

"I shall leave these people to-morrow," I said, "I am going to Lille."

"And altogether, how long have you been in France?"

I would much rather not have been questioned by this M. de Beausset, whose curiosity seemed to me impertinent. I was equivocally placed, however, and I considered it due to myself to give some explanation; but I spoke proudly and distantly.

"I arrived at Calais four days ago." I said. "If I had not had the misfortune to lose my purse, I should now be in Paris. Whatever these people may appear in your eyes, I may not forget that I owe them a debt of gratitude."

"Well, that's quite right. But you must by this time be aware, that when young ladies go rambling by themselves, they are liable to get into scrapes. Now I suppose the fact

water. To judge from their eager emphasis and wild gesticulations as they spoke, they seemed to have enough of native spirit to sustain them. I wished that they had conversed in a language that I understood. I should have liked to know what were the plans they seemed to be discussing so eagerly; what objects of interest attracted them in this gregarious life; whether they had any wish or hope beyond it. I had, besides, a lurking sympathy with these self-made freemen, who would not be shackled with the conventionalisms of the world.

By the flickering light of the wood fire, these wild faces and extended figures became again invested with the romantic picturesqueness that daylight more than half robbed them of. I was thinking that as we sat we might supply material for a grand picture, when José whom I had missed for some time, approached, tuning his fiddle.

"Room there for M. de Beausset!" he cried; "room for the gipisies' friend!"

There was an instantaneous starting up of men and women.

"Keep your seats, and be hanged to you!" cried M. de Beausset; "why do you startle us in that way, like a flock of frightened geese? Ah, Morgotte! I'll come and sit by you, and you shall tell me my fortune again for I'm quite losing heart. The world uses me very scurvily, Morgotte."

"That must be your own fault, monsieur," said the girl, by whose side he had thrown himself. "You have youth, health, wealth, and—and you are talented and handsome. It is not such as you that the world is inclined to use so."

"Now what's the use of flattering a fellow, and making him look like a puppy?" said M. de Beausset. "What advantages are there in circumstances that place out of one's reach the true elixir of life? I tell you I'm *ennuied* to death, Morgotte. Am I not compelled to come to you in order to be able to live at all?"

A deep sigh from Morgotte caused me to turn and look at her. She was sitting with, her head bent down, beating her fingers together. I caught a glimpse of the very handsome face and elegant figure of M. de Beausset. José

his wagon, but he only goes as far as Mouscron; but from Mouscron you could easily get on to Lille."

I made up my mind to proceed by this conveyance. Presently Jaques returned, with Lisette. He presented her to me, I thought, with an air of pride, that increased my surprise at finding her plain, though the expression of her countenance and her manners were very pleasing. He was much handsomer, as a man, than she was as a woman; but the devotion seemed to be chiefly on his side. Hearts are sometimes to be won by qualities that rank far above the ephemeral advantages of mere outside prettiness, and Jaques Rebaud had, doubtless, secured for himself a good wife.

Jaques had evidently been talking about me, for Lisette in her quiet, respectful way, manifested a strong interest in me and my fortunes.

"But you, Jaques, and mother, to think of our convent for mademoiselle!" she said. "Why, the lady superior herself lives upon black bread, vegetables, and water, all the year round, except on festivals, when they have a little fish. If mademoiselle could only get to Paris!"

I told them that I designed going first to Lille, and then mentioned my intention of proceeding to Mouscron in Robert Durand's wagon.

"How uncomfortable for you!" said Lisette; "he travels in the night, and is so slow. Ah! I remember something —how lucky!"

She went into the outer room, in which stood several boxes. They were her own, and had been sent on before her. She unlocked one, and brought from it a pillow covered with black leather.

"Monsieur le Baron gave me this," she said; "but I have no use for it. You will find plenty of straw in the wagon, and with the help of this, you may be able to sleep."

It was in vain that I resisted taking it; and in the midst of our contention Madame Beton carried it off, saying she would see to its being placed in the wagon herself.

This excess of kindness, to which I had not been accustomed from strangers, touched me even to pain. My poverty and destitution seemed only to increase the respect

you'll not meet with many good Christians anywhere. I can confidently recommend you to my aunt, however, and hers is the kind of protection of which you stand in need. I will speak to her the first thing in the morning, and I pray that you will not neglect to go; Morgette will show you the way."

I again promised and thanked him; and hastily bidding me good-night, and telling Jose to follow him, M. de Beausset disappeared.

I slept that night in the tent, near Morgotte, but surrounded by several others, women and children. Early in the morning Morgotte roused me, for towards morning I slept heavily.

"I am to go with you to the convent," she said. "M. de Beausset fears to lose sight of you. He told me this, and gave me the order as if I had been a dog!"

There was a singular fierceness in her speech and looks, and her eyes flashed with an expression that made me shrink from her.

"Yet he seems gentle and kind," I said. "But it is me that you will oblige most. I already owe you my thanks, and will reward you for this service."

"You would give me money after tearing my heart!" she exclaimed, savagely. "Yes, you will reward me,—you have rewarded me already!" and she turned from me with a wild laugh.

I had lost one friend already. Was it possible that this girl loved M. de Beausset, and that she was jealous of *me?* I could only surmise this. Perhaps M. de Beausset had wronged her; he was rich and powerful, and by such the agonies of the poor are accounted small matters. Well, I had learned this truth, and Morgotte had, at least, nothing to fear from me.

I sought Jose and offered to pay him for the services I had received from him and his people, but he refused to take anything.

"We shall loose nothing by entertaining you," he said; "besides, that was not our bargain."

After breakfast Morgotte suddenly appeared before me, carrying my carpet-bag.

"Are you ready?" she asked, sullenly.

I was ready in a few minutes, and I offered to carry my luggage myself.

"Yes!" she said, "and if we meet M. de Beausset he will say, 'Why does not that Egyptian vagabond wait upon mademoiselle, as she ought to do?'"

"*Can* M. de Beausset speak in that way?"

"He can look it," said the girl, fiercely.

We walked on a few paces, and we were close upon the city.

"Morgotte," I said, "you are a woman, and may be true to yourself. Stand up for the honor of your sex, and shun men like this M. de Beausset. Why should you thus care about him?"

"Have I not eyes and ears? Can I not see, and feel, and think like you?" said Morgotte. "Why should *you* care about him?"

"I do not, except as a stranger who seems inclined to help me."

"It is false!"

"What am I to say to you, Morgotte? Do you think I am silly, or mad enough to have fallen in love with this man?"

"It would not be of much use for you," said Morgotte, "for M. de Beausset is engaged to marry. I *know* that he does not love her he is about to wed. I would not have him love any one."

"Not yourself, surely, Morgotte?"

"And why not? Why not me as well as you, or any one else?"

"I fear M. de Beausset is a villain."

"How dare you say that, or think it—you that know nothing of him? He is the very soul of honor. If he said to me this moment, 'Morgotte, I love you!' I would follow him to the end of the earth; but he never did say it—he never will. He laughs with me, and at me—he despises me too much!"

I knew not what to say to this girl, so abandoned to a hopeless attachment. We had entered the city, and were traversing the streets. In one of them, Morgotte stopped

before a door set in a dead wall. She rang a bell, and presently the wicket was opened by the portress in a nun's habit. When I told her my name and errand,—(I had given the name of Margaret Payne to M. de Beausset),—she gave me admitance. Morgotte had vanished before I could again speak to her.

I was led through a small court-yard into the house, and then through a long corridor, till I was finally ushered into a room, scantly furnished with a table and a few chairs.—Upon a small stand stood an ivory crucifix, and over the mantlepiece was a painting repsesenting some saint. This was all the room contained, except a green curtain or screen that covered one entire end of it. It was from behind this that the superior, mother Magdalene, at length made her appearance.

Her figure was tall and stately, and she did not seem to be above forty-five years of age. I was first struck by the extreme placidity of her countenance. No emotion seemed ever to have ruffled its calm surface, and her clear, pale complexion, and large blue eyes, were set off becomingly by the flowing dress of black serge, with its ample sleeves, and by the long white veil and scapulary.

"You are welcome, my daughter," she said, kindly taking my hand. "Sit down beside me. M. de Beausset has been telling me about you, and I have promised him that I will do what I can to help you. You are young to have met with so much trouble in the world; but, alas! the world abounds with trouble. Here, at least, you will find peace for a season."

Her kind manner and gentle voice,—above all, the quiet pity of those passionless eyes,—seemed to stir up from their depths all the old griefs of my life. I took her hands and kissed them, and wept passionately.

"What is to be done with this child?" she said. "Alas! you have wanted discipline, and have yet to learn that these strong emotions are sinful. Compose yourself, and cast these troubles upon Christ, who is able and willing to bear them for you."

"Alas! alas!" I exclaimed, "I have been amongst them that have taken all trust in Christ from me!"

"Ah! sad work!" said mother Magdalene. "Do you not know that Christ is not of the world? If you would seek him, you must come out of it. But have courage; calm yourself, and we'll see what can be done. Do not give way to these passionate feelings. You are not in the world now, but amongst those who are vowed to God, and who keep down the evil of their natures by mortification. I trust that these examples will be for your good."

I subdued my emotion by a strong effort. I could not help thinking, as mother Magdalene rose and rang a bell, that if mortification was a good specific for keeping down the evil that is within us, I had been pretty well tried already. A very pleasant-faced nun, about thirty years of age, entered.

"Dame Marie Morine," said mother Magdalene, "for the present you shall take charge of this child. You will introduce her to the others, and let her understand the regulations of the house. In the evening I must have a longer conference with her."

I accompanied dame Marie Morine, who took me up into the dormitory. She showed me into a cell-like sleeping-room, in which my carpet-bag was already placed, and told me I might consider it as my own. She was very lively, good-natured, and chatty, and learning that I had never been in a convent before, seemed to take a pleasure in leading me over the place and describing what must be so new to me. These nuns did not belong to a strict order, and the mortification (after that of giving up the world) was chiefly voluntary. In the large, cheerful school-room, to which I was shortly ushered, I found assembled about twenty pupils, with about as many nuns and a very jovial-looking old priest. Dame Marie Morine introduced me generally to the whole.

"You are welcome, my daughter," said the priest, advancing and extending his hand. "Here is a stubborn little rebel, who says she shall never be able to learn your hard English. I shall turn her over to you,—see what you can make of her."

He went out, after pushing towards me a fair-haired little girl, who laughed very merrily, and told me in French that I should not be able to make anything of her.

"Our English teacher left us some time ago," said dame Marie Morine. "We are negociating for another, and in the meantime, ladies, mother Magdalene desires that none of you will address Mademoiselle Margaret except in English." There was much elevating of eye-brows and shrugging of shoulders at this intimation. Seeing how I might best make myself useful, I took up one of the English books and began catechizing the scholar more particularly recommended to my charge. Dame Marie Morine formed a regular class for me, and I continued thus employed during some time.

In the evening, when I again saw mother Magdalene, she did not press me on the subject of my personal history, when I told her that the past was as yet too painful for me to speak about. She made herself acquainted with my acquirements, and, above all, with my disquiet of mind; with the doubts, and distresses, and perplexities that were leading me away from God, instead of drawing me nigh to His presence.

And mother Magdalene undertook the task of leading me back of God. She had already made her own way to my heart, and I yielded myself implicitly into her hands. I cared nothing for mere differences of creed: where I met with the kindness enjoined by Christ, and I had met it here. I could well believe that Christianity most abounded; and it was easy work to make anything of me when the old stumbling-blocks of indifference, and cruelty, and injustice were moved out of my path. Ah! Protestanism was venal and cold,—a religion without a soul, as mother Magdalene said. What interest could these people have, except a commendable one, in seeking to draw me to their way of thinking? Why were they not indifferent, like my own countrypeople? Why did they not leave me to perish, soul and body, in the streets?

I had no strong prejudices to combat. My grand-father had called the Reformation glorious, by which the Church of Rome had been overthrown in England; but he had never before me entered upon the theme of its errors. I was guided by my individual experience of the working of the two systems; and I gave up my whole soul to the Church of Rome, and once more believed that there was a Saviour and a God.

Its institutions, so far as conventual life went, seemed to me replete with the spirit of Christianity. I had seen enough of the world to know that such a refuge as monastic life only affords, must often be a priceless boon to many, who, like myself, either inherit the world's contempt, or shrink from its hard usage, or weary of its heartlessness, and I felt that I might eventually be glad to turn to such a refuge. Battle with the world I first would, bravely; but I should soon have none to struggle for, and I had a long, solitary life before me, and it seemed a consolation to me to know that I might return there to die peacefully.

Ah, Mary! "blessed amongst women," as the angel called thee, how my whole heart turned to thee when, in the first enthusiasm of my new faith, I was taught to supplicate thee as a mother! To me, who had never known a human mother, this idea of a divine one had a peculiar charm. I had many sorrows that I could not reveal to the world, and here was an outlet for all the pent-up grief of my soul.—The encouragement of enthusiasm is peculiar to the Church of Rome, and in this one respect I had plenty to work upon; I began to wonder at the dearth of my past spiritual life.

I had been here nearly two months, and had written to mother Meulen, whom I could not yet repay, and had heard in reply that Lisette and Jaques were married and very happy. No news of my grand-father, none of Aunt Betsy, and none of Uncle Stephen or George—no hope of any. What a void in my life! One of the nuns seemed to have *penchant* for punishing herself. She showed me the horsehair she wore next her skin; the cord that had nearly eaten into her flesh; and I knew that she was in the habit of frequently scourging herself. This mode of subduing the spirit puzzled me exceedingly; all the more because I felt so sure it would do me no good. Sister Clare recommended it to me as a cure for my earthly regrets, and I made her a reply that subjected me to a severe lecture from mother Magdalene, and to a penance from the priest.

It was by very slow degrees that the attempt was made to bring me to spiritual obedience. I acknowledged my stubbornness of heart, at the same time that I willingly undertook any task that was enjoined; and I was assured that

in a short time I should become sensible of an inward change, that would be gratifying to myself as well as others. All this time I was longing for some *outward* change. My great object being to earn money sufficient to carry me to Australia, I began anxiously to consider the probability of receiving any remuneration for my services in this place, —a question I could scarcely ask. I had a horror of any appearance of any ingratitude; but at the same time I felt sure, that if there was any design to keep me altogether in that place in a state of bodily and spiritual dependence, I should rebel.

I was saved from anything so repugnant to my own feelings by a missive that arrived from Paris. I was called into mother Magdalene's room one morning, and informed that Mademoiselle de Lammenais, the betrothed bride of M. de Beausset, wished to engage me in the capacity of companion.

"Her grand-mother," said the superior, "is a most pious woman; and you will not be without good example, though surrounded by many temptations, which you can only escape by frequent communications with your spiritual adviser. The Comtesse de Lammenais has thoughtfully requested that, as you are so young, you might not be sent to Paris alone. Father Dessalle is to proceed there at the end of the week, and you can go under his protection. In the meantime we shall scarcely be able to prepare you. Send dame Marie Morine to me."

I had hitherto worn the single dress in which I had arrived, and now I was assisted by the nuns in making up several new ones. There was always a supply of ready-made linen in the convent, as it formed a part of the work, for which the nuns periodically obtained a ready sale. I was bountifully supplied from this store; and being remunerated so liberally, so far beyond what I had any right to expect, I felt pained, and ashamed at having thought unworthily of those who labored so earnestly for my temporal as well as spiritual advantage.

It was during the Christmas vacation that these preparations were made for sending me to Paris. I have before said that these nuns were not of a strict order; and the

circumstance of the convent being a school, also allowed them a large intercourse with the world. I had never observed anything like discontent amongst the professed nuns, but there was one young novitiate who had attracted my observation by her melancholy air and frequent deep sighs; and I wondered if, like me, she had suffered in the world, without, like me, feeling the power and resolution to venture again into the midst of its turmoil.

The day before my departure I was passing through the corridor, when this young girl stopped me in an agitated manner. She asked me to accompany her into the garden for a moment; and I went.

"O my God!" she said, looking anxiously round, "you are going to Paris, and you are leaving me here to die! My heart is breaking, Mademoiselle Marguerite!"

"What trouble have you that you cannot confide to mother Magdalene, who is so gentle and compassionate?" I said.

"*She* compassionate! she is like them all—cruel and inexorable! They are driving me mad! I have wept and entreated—I have knelt and prayed; they know that I have no vocation, yet they insist upon making me a nun. I will die first! There is no help for me in this place, unless you will help me. O Marguerite! you have been a Protestant, if you are not one now: cannot *you* show me a little mercy?"

Protestants turning to Catholics for mercy, and Catholics to Protestants—this was strange work!

"But they will not, surely, force you to be a nun!—they cannot."

"Hush! we shall be overheard and ruined. O my God! do you pity me?"

"I do from my soul, Clémence: show me how I can help you."

"And you would dare to help me?"

"Yes; I would dare anything, if I thought you were being wronged."

"Is it not cruel wrong to shut me up here for life against my will?"

"That must be your parents' fault."

No: I have no parents—none that I ever knew. I have been told that I am illegitimate: they give me this intelligence, thinking that it will reconcile me to this doom to which they would condemn me. I understand that my parents are living and in the world, and that I must not disgrace them. If they can walk abroad with this sin upon them, why am I to be punished so severely? If they have any hearts, I will yet wring them. I can die by some means: you see, if I chose I could dash my brains out this minute against yonder stone wall. It's all nonsense being compelled to bear a long life of agony: no one need do that."

"Dear Clémence, don't talk so; this is terrible! You asked if I would help you."

"Yes, you might carry me a letter to Paris."

"I will."

"Ah, you are my good angel! But oh! you must be wary! If we are discovered! I have the letter written: I will place it under your pillow the last thing to-night.—Do you understand?"

"Perfectly."

"It is ready, addressed to M. Picarde, banker Chaussée d'Antin, Paris. This gentleman has always paid my board here, and sometimes he has come down to see me. I want to let him understand the consequences of compelling me to profess."

"And you are not allowed to write to him?"

"Oh no! and I am not to see him again. They tell me that he has now done with me, and that I must wean my thoughts from the world—the world that I have never seen, that I long to enter!"

"And have you lived here all your life, Clémence?"

"Ever since I can remember," she said, sadly.

This was worse than the perfect indifference of Colonel Leigh. How could they be called Christians who brought children into the world to neglect or oppress them thus?

"And this letter, what am I to do with it?"

"Put it in the Paris post whenever you have an opportunity of doing so free of observation. You must not be found out as having helped me, for the world. Do you

know what vengeance these people can take if they are thwarted? Do not take it to the post for a whole month at least. Then you will not be suspected."

"And when are you to be professed?"

"Never! They say I shall profess at Midsummer. They shall see!"

There was a bold resoluteness about this young creature, whose violent grief was literally wearing her to a shadow. I was instantly revolted by this injustice, this cruelty, practiced by those to whom I had given credit for so much humanity. O Saviour! that requirest an undivided place in the hearts of thy people, how was I tormented by doubt, and perplexities, while as yet I only sought to understand Christianity in the actions of men!

I sewed Clémence's letter into my stays, and my heart was indignantly throbbing against it when mother Magdalene gave me her parting advice, on the night befor I set out for Paris. How kind she was! How affectionately she admonished me, as a mother might do! After all, I had to take into consideration the prejudices of her education. She, also, had never been in the world; and she, doubtless, felt justified in even enforcing a way of life that had brought peace to herself.

I took a friendly leave of all the nuns and departed with father Dessalle in the diligence. We traveled all day and night, and arrived in Paris in the morning. The priest hired a vehicle that drove us to the hôtel de Lammenais, in the suburb St. Germain.

We were ushered into a splendid apartment on the first floor, and a very lean and withered, but very dressy woman whom I instantly suspected to be highly rouged, even at that early hour, came to us.

"Ah, Madame Maraude! looking well as ever, I see," said the priest. (Why did he not rather reprove her for this unseemly folly at her time of life?) "How is the comtesse, and the little Emillie?"

"Emillie is charmingly well, but not up yet. Ah, father Dessalle, it's well for the rich and gay, that can keep late hours for their own pleasure: as for me, what with sitting up half the night with Madame la Comtesse, who you know

is near dying at least once in twenty-four hours, and attending to other matters in the day, I'm nearly worn out. I'm sure I don't know what is to become of me when I am grown old."

"If that time should ever arrive," said the priest, bowing politely. "I suppose you are prepared to receive this young lady, who was consigned to my charge by mother Magdalene. You will see to her proper accommodation and mention her arrival to Mademoiselle Emillie."

"O yes, I expected her," said the waiting-woman. "She is English, I see: I can speak a little English, and I intend to improve myself. But you—you speak French well?"

"Like a French-woman," said the priest, answering for me.

"Ma foi! we shall get on rarely. Will you take coffee, father Dessalle?"

"Mademoiselle Marguerite and I will breakfast together, if you please. Afterwards I have business with the comtesse."

Father Dessalle, who had been very taciturn during the journey, was now cheerful and talkative. He drew my attention to one of the large windows, commanding a view of the beautiful locality in which the hôtel was situated. Then he pointed out several fine paintings on the walls of the room; then we sat down to coffee, served in Sévres china with an accompaniment of silver plate.

Father Dessalle gave a friendly greeting to the little powdered-headed footman who waited.

"You are still troubled with your old complaint, I see, Baptiste," (the latter limped a little): "how do you manage it?"

"Sacristie! it's all the fault of M. l'Abbé Roullett," said Baptiste. "He took for me to Rome a nostrum to be blessed by his Holiness; and I once knew the same remedy to perform a perfect cure in a few minutes. But M. l'Abbé forgets me."

"We must stir up his memory," said father Dessalle. "Let me see; I shall be writing to him soon, and I'll mention it."

Baptiste was profuse in his thanks.

What folly was this? It puzzled me.

Father Dessalle left the room, saying he should have the pleasure of seeing me frequently. Indeed I afterwards learned that he was the Comtesse de Lammenais' confessor. I don't know what it was that made me feel more restless, and unsettled, and unhappy, in that splendid mansion than I had been in the plain, quiet convent. Perhaps it was the thought—and it would come—of how differently my pauper aunt and my convict grand-father were lodged and attended. I could not help feeling in my heart that I should have been much happier if I had been allowed an opportunity of earning what I wanted in a humbler sphere, away from this grandeur and gaiety, which only threatened to oppress me. The splendid carpets and gilded ceilings, the pictures and mirrors, and statuary, and articles of *virtu*, made my eyes and heart ache. It was necessary to be born to this magnificence and glitter, in order to sit down to its enjoyment and close one's senses to the squalor and wretchedness lying outside, covered by the same sky, but in no other respect seeming to be a production of the same earth. To be here, too, perhaps, subject to the whims and humors of a capricious mistress, was not to be independent as I wished to be. What a hard matter it was to put to proper use the willing labor of either head or hand!

I stood in the midst of this splendor, gazing in the fire and forgetting it. I thought of my grand-father, yet upon the sea—alone there with his God! I thought of many things that tended to dissatisfy me with the present. Then I thought of poor Clémence, and I exclaimed aloud and involuntarily,—"Thank God that I am at least free!"

"Free!" said a voice beside me. "I did not come here to play the eavesdropper, and I give you welcome to Paris, Mademoiselle Payne," said M. de Beausset: "but what a wild dream this of yours is! What right have *you* to feel yourself free where all else are slaves—slaves to fashions and customs, to prejudices and superstitions; slaves to their own follies and passions? What do you call freedom?"

"The right of being such a voluntary slave as you have described. The right of forging my own fetters."

"And you think you possess this freedom?"

"By fits and starts I do; though I have more reason to feel myself a slave, indeed, when I look round me here and remember what I am."

"You pain me," said M. de Beausset. "I have had my own share, it is true, in bringing you here, but it was involuntary. I spoke against it: I would gladly have kept you in the asylum where I first placed you."

I thought this was not a very complimentary speech, but I could afford to let it pass.

"I have no right to quarrel with fate as one who is free to choose," I said, "and doubtless my thanks are due to some one for the motive that brought me here. My thanks are still due to you for introducing me to the kind friends I have left behind me."

"Don't thank me, pray. Burden me with anything but the gratitude that always comes to nothing!"

I thought there was an implied reproach in these words.

"If I am dissatisfied, it is the fault of circumstances rather than of my nature" I said. "I think I am capable of feeling truly grateful for the help that has been afforded me,— for the protection I have received."

"I don't doubt that," said M. de Beausset, moving uneasily from the chair against which he had been leaning. "Hang it! how hard it is to make one's self understood! Don't thank me, even in your heart, till you see the issue of all this—that's all. Some day you may see reason to curse me for my interference."

"Sir?"

He stood for a moment with his hand pressed to his forehead, as if too abstracted to hear me. I had a full view of his tall, manly figure; of his noble head, with its clustering curls of dark hair; of his side-face, sharply and delicately cut, as if by the hand of a sculptor. It pained me to see how the broad forehead was contracted, and the firm mouth compressed. What could it mean? Was my presence there, which he had said he could have dispensed with, a pain to him? This was not mending matters for me.

"If I have been disagreeably forced upon you personally, M. de Beausset," I said, "there is still an easy remedy. I

have gained my first wish in having been enabled to reach Paris. I have no fear of not being able to earn a living in some way."

"My God! I must be misunderstood!" said M. de Beausset, in agitation. "No, by Heaven! you shall not do this—you mistake me altogether. None would have more rejoiced to receive you, if I could have believed that your coming here was for your own good or—— The fact is, Mademoiselle Payne, you must set me down as an extraordinary fellow, whose vagaries are not worth noticing. By and bye, you will discover that the smoothest of all destinies has fairly ennuied me to death. I envy you the necessity that makes life a struggle to you; the absence of outward that leaves you in possession of inward power."

"And it is thus that Providence equalizes the destinies of earth?"

"Yes. In some way or other we are made to feel our mortality, our impotence, exalt ourselves as we will. If we are not humbled by others, we are humbled by our own failures and infirmities, and the oppressor is often more of a slave than the oppressed. This knowledge should reconcile us to much."

"If one was a pilosopher: but this knowledge is not universal. For my part, it would not reconcile me to injustice to know that my oppressor possessed less spiritual freedom than myself. I should then despise myself."

"We must positively discard philosophy, then; and I am afraid you have too much of that same spiritual freedom to make an orthodox Catholic. What! have you not resigned yourself implicitly into the hands of your new teachers? Have you any mental reservations?"

I was annoyed by the light, mocking tone in which he spoke, and he smiled sarcastically, I thought maliciously.

"M. de Beausset," I said, "I have been in the habit of thinking for myself, and I am not likely to believe more than seems good to me."

"You have much of the stubbornness of heresy about you yet, I see," said M. de Beausset. "In fact it surprised me when I heard that you had become a convert to the true faith. Beware, however, how you bring scandal upon us of

the hôtel de Lammenais, who are famous for our obedience to the Church. You will find nothing to equal us in this respect in Paris."

It was impossible to believe him serious in what he said, in spite of his gravity. I turned and looked in the fire again.

"Our common mistress is very tyrannical, mademoiselle," continued M. de Beausset. "She knows we are both waiting, and you see how she trifles with our impatience. It is twelve o'clock by Nôtre Dame. Ah, Annette, what news?"

"My young lady wishes to see you both: you, monsieur, and mademoiselle," said the pretty young grisette who had entered. "Please to walk this way."

We followed her to a richly-furnished dressing-room, in which we found Mademoiselle Emillie de Lammenais seated before a large cheval glass, her long fair hair floating over her neck and shoulders. She was *petit* and pretty, with small features, blue eyes, and a brilliant complexion.

"Come here and let me look at you," she said, without turning her head. "Both together, you know—you two who met so romantically! Ah, she is handsome; is she not, Victor? I like the name, too—Marguerite. Now I think I shall take you into great favor—both of you, though *you* scarcely deserve it, Victor."

"You were always capricious and cruel to myself," said M. de Beausset. "You have received my bouquet? I hope it has pleased you."

"Ah, it is superb!" said Mademoiselle Lammenais, glancing carelessly at a group of exotic flowers lying on the dressing-table. "How long is it your pleasure to weary me with compliments this morning?"

"Not longer than you wish, certainly," said M. de Beausset. "Perhaps I had better give you a respite, Emillie,"

"Ah, charmente! but *will* you? Marguerite, I have a caprice that you should braid my hair this morning. See, here is a model for you. I am told that you can do almost anything."

"I fear that reputation will cause you disappointment," I said, "but I will try my best." I glanced at the print representing a head of hair elaborately plaited behind, and in

front laid in smooth bands. I commenced operations, and M. de Beausset stood with folded arms gazing at us both.

"Ah, what fairy fingers!" exclaimed mademoiselle Lammenais, surveying me in the glass. "Allow me to look at your hands, Marguerite."

I held them out in some confusion.

"Beautiful! are they not, Victor? So white and tapering, so delicately rosy and soft!"

"They are marvellously like your own, Emillie."

"I can set that compliment down for nothing, else I should quarrel with you. What does your English play say, Marguerite? 'Behold the foil that sets this brightness off!' Monsieur's speech reminded me of that."

I had read the play of "The Inconstant," and this quotation made me blush.

"I am unfortunate to-day," said M. de Beausset. "I must positively go and ride off my chagrin. Where shall I find you to-night, Emillie?"

"At madame la Marquise de Pauvenay's, if you like to come. Ah, Marguerite! you are progressing divinely! M. de Beausset, I must thank you for giving me such a treasure." She held to him her small hand as she spoke.

"I am averse to receiving thanks till I feel assured that I have conferred a benefit," said M. de Beausset, moving off.

"Ah, see! Now the monster is turning upon you, Marguerite! Never mind, I shall like you all the better. Bon jour, monsieur."

He returned the salute and left us.

"What horrid creatures the men are!" said mademoiselle de Lammenais; "how I hate their compliments, that rarely mean anything but impertinence! Don't you, Marguerite?"

I confessed that I had had no experience this way.

"No, really? and you so handsome! What misfortune! You have, then, all this dreadfulness to come! Do you know I am in hopes that M. de Beausset admires you. It would be so tiresome to have a husband entirely devoted to one's self.

"You cannot mean this?" I said, in the simplicity of my surprise.

"Ah, mon Dieu! yes. But you are English, and the

English rejoice in being ennuied. What a cold country, not to afford you a lover before this time! How old are you?"

"I was seventeen last month."

"And I am eighteen. Holy Mother! I have been pestered to death with adorers for the last two years. Now I begin to feel weary, and submit myself to a marriage de convenance with M. de Beausset. You must see that we are well matched."

In what respect? I thought. In mutual indifference? I should have considered M. de Beausset capable of profounder feeling. Was he mercenary? Had *ennui* driven him to this union without love that promised no happiness? How I pitied them both while I condemned them!

"Ah, I like myself to-day!" exclaimed mademoiselle de Lammenais, surveying herself in the glass. "You shall always dress my hair—will you? You are very good. You shall accompany me to-night to madame la Marquise de Pauvenay's. Just now religion is the fashion, and there is a furor for making converts. You are *my* convert, remember. Ah I shall enjoy your confusion at the compliments you will receive, for you are really very beautiful. Don't you know that? Why, you are positively blushing! Heigho! I must be very religious to-day, or I shall begin to envy you."

I was summoned from Mademoiselle de Lammenai's dressing-room to attend her grand-mother, the comtesse. Madame Maraude led the way to a small boudoir on the same floor, in which I found the old lady in company with father Dessalle. She was dressed in a bygone fashion, appeared to be very old and wrinkled, very nervous, and fidgetty too.—She was reclined upon a couch, propped up with pillows, and was surrounded with crucifixes, rosaries, and manuals of devotion. In her hands she held a piece of embroidery.—For some minutes I wondered who she reminded me of, till at length I felt sure that she resembled lady Leigh.

"Sit down, child," she said, "here beside me. My eyes are growing dim, but I must yet see to do good. Ah, pauvre innocent! so they used you ill in your own country? How could you expect different from heretics! What a blessing to be received into the fold of the true church!

Mother Madeleine consigns you especially to my charge; and I shall desire to see you frequently, though you will attend upon my grand-daughter. You, so young in the faith, will need constant instruction and admonition. Father Dessalle, too, will pay you constant attention. God has given you to us, and we shall take care of you. Come closer to me, I want to see you."

My heart warmed towards this old lady, who addressed me as a daughter, who did not shrink from me as lady Leigh had done. I moved nearer to her, and she took my hand.

"Ah, pretty!" she said; "very pretty. Don't you think me very old and ugly? Yet I, too, was considered very handsome once. How necessary it is that we should fix our thoughts upon eternal things!"

"None can teach her that truth better than yourself, comtesse," said father Dessalle; "and for the present I shall leave her with you. Have you any commands for me?"

"I wish you would call again to-night, just to see how I am," said the comtesse. "And you really think I am not looking worse?"

"Decidedly," said father Dessalle. "You are a little nervous, that is all. I shall call in the evening, and hope to find you better."

"Ah, what a dear man he is!" said the comtesse, after he was gone. "The priests are the only truly polite men, after all. Father Dessalle never loses the recollection of what I was. My dear, I am English like you; I was a belle at the court of George the Third. When I married the Comte de Lammenais, and came to Paris in 1815, I was considered the finest woman at the court of Louis, though I had then passed my bloom. Isn't that true, Maraude?"

"Quite true madame," said Maraude. "Ah, those were days! There were the Duc de Lancy and Comte Lammenais dying for you; and poor Monsieur de St. Moray! Ah, madame! you were very cruel! I would not have your sins that way to answer for."

The comtesse simpered; her sins of that description did not seem to lie heavily upon her conscience.

"Ah, we lost everything when the Bourbons began to

decline!" said the comtesse, as if she mentally charged the new dynasty with robbing her of her youth. "The bourgeois king has no attraction at his court for the old nobility of France. They would rob us of our religion, too, in these days. Holy Mother! they are growing more philosophical and sceptical than in the times of Voltaire! My poor child, I must take great care of you, for you don't understand by what dangers you are beset. I think you have a very pretty hand; let me see. I am a connoisseur in hands. My family are remarkable for beautiful hands; and at the court of George the Third, myself and my sister, lady Leigh, were pronounced to have the most perfect hands in England.—Do look, Maraude! I declare I could fancy these had once been my own!"

I turned pale and cold whilst they were examining my hands. Miserable inheritance! Perhaps this was the reason why these hands had never done me any good service! If I had had any right to claim such a relationship, Emillie de Lammenais would then have been my cousin!

"Well, I declare," said Maraude, "they are exactly like what yours were! exactly like Mademoiselle Emillie's. How singular!"

"Be proud of your hands," said the comtesse; "they are a mark of gentle birth. But, alas! I am wandering into vanities! What matters hands, or anything else that belongs to mortality? Look at mine: you may still see what they have been. The hands are, unfortunately, the first to fade. Maraude, give me that rosary."

Maraude handed her a long string of beads, with a cross attached. The lips and fingers of the comtesse moved rapidly in concert, as for the space of several minutes she occupied herself with this bauble. Maraude bowed her head very reverently during the silence; and I sat looking, I fear, very foolish.

"You see," said the comtesse, at length, handing the rosary to Maraude, "how hard it is to be a Christian. I have suffered my thoughts to wander away to vanities, and I am compelled to perform penance. Six Paternosters and six Ave Maries. It is heavy work, but we must keep right before God. Ah! I feel another twinge, Maraude. I have

been neglecting this work for our blessed Lady of Cleury! but, Holy Virgin! I mean to finish it directly. Mademoiselle Payne, you shall read to me from the lives of the saints; no better reading to divert our thoughts from the world. What examples to us!"

From the glimpse she had given me of her past life, I thought the comtesse was beginning late with good examples. I read to her from the lives of the saints, and listened to her commentaries during an hour and a half. Then she told me to look at her work.

"Can you embroider in this way?" she said. "No! Then I must teach you. It is a meritorious work. Ah! what a blessing it is to be allowed so to cover our sins! This is a robe for our Lady of Cleury. I intend to enrich it with several of the gems I used to wear. Alas! I have no further use for them myself. Is your arm as beautiful as your hand? I had splendid arms, and the Duc de Lancy used to say he envied the diamonds that sparkled on them. Ah! you should have seen what a fine gentleman he was! But I am wandering again: give me the rosary."

In the absence of Maraude, I had the honor of performing this service for her. Her penance this time was very brief, and she desired me to ring the bell. Maraude appeared.

"Tell my grand-daughter it is time I saw her," said the comtesse. "I would have her set a good example to our young proselyte."

Mademoiselle Lammenais presently entered, and curtsied very demurely.

"Come hither, child," said the comtesse. "I don't know what heavier penance I need than having this charge upon me of the young and thoughtless. Have you attended to the duties enjoined by your confessor, Emillie?"

"I have repeated a dozen Aves Maries since breakfast," said Emillie, yawning.

"That's right! But I fear you don't attend to the more necessary work, Emillie. You don't admonish M. de Beausset as you ought to do."

"What am *I* to do with him? He is the nephew of a cardinal, and you surely don't suspect him of heresy? Don't

weary me too much about him, grand-mamma, or I shall never endure him for a husband. You know he is not a Duc de Lancy—not even a Chevalier de Moray."

"Ah, you saucy child!" said the comtesse. "Sit down, and let me talk to you, for I see you are going all wrong. No wonder that you should be led astray in these degenerate days! There is no mentioning M. de Beausset and the Duc de Lancy in the same breath, it is true. The latter was so noble, so chivalrous, so religious! Holy Mother! when I first became a convert, how he labored to keep me right! I shall never forget when I first put on the dress of a Sister of Mercy! He said he had never seen any one become it so well. It was through him I wore it so often, and you may be sure I did a deal of good. Yes, he labored for my spiritual benefit. You see, he felt great interest in me."

"Ah, grand-mamma, everybody knows that he loved you, and that despair killed him!"

"Does the world say that?" asked the comtesse, her dim eyes kindling. "How could I help it? I was married, you know. Ah, those were hard times to live consistently! There was the Chevalier de St. Moray, who shot himself, and they laid that to my charge: it is a censorious world!"

"Then there was the Comte de Ligny," said Emillie.

"The finest man in France, I give you my word!" said the comtesse. "All the court-ladies were in love with him, married and single; but he *would* devote himself to me. How could I help it? Ah, I have gone through a great deal of trouble!"

"I shouldn't make a trouble of it at all," said Emillie.

"Ah, child, you are talking sinfully!" said the comtesse, relapsing into her devotional mood. "Don't say that I have led you astray. Come, you need a little mortification: you shall bestow some of your jewellery upon this robe for our blessed Lady."

Emillie glanced at it, I thought, with contempt.

"Anything for peace," she said, unclasping a diamond bracelet from her wrist. "This should absolve me from many sins, grandma, for it was a favorite."

"No doubt it will," said the comtesse, receiving the bracelet. "Ah, there's nothing like mortification of the flesh!

I'll tell M. l'Abbé Roullet that you must be remembered in the prayers of the community. Now I think you may go forth safely; but be upon your guard, the world is full of snares."

Emillie laughed lightly.

"I leave you in good company," she said, turning to me; "at dinner-time I shall see you again, and then we can arrange about the evening. *Addio!*" And she went out with a bound, as if rejoicing in the release.

I passed the remainder of the day until dinner-time with the comtesse, whose alternate fits of vanity and devotion would have amused me, if I had been less interested in the faith she professed. I began to feel that my new creed was a miserable failure. After all, what did it matter? I was only left where I was, except that I had made an advance that promised to benefit me temporarily. But how desolate I felt in the world as I thought this!

CHAPTER XV.

The comtesse, mademoiselle de Lammenais, and myself dined together. I did not inquire too minutely into the cause of my being thus treated as one of the family; I did not shrink from the place accorded to me as one unworthy of it. Absorbed by reflections, that made the present important only in connexion with the past, I was incapable of being impressed by much of what was around me. I accommodated myself to circumstances with a sort of mechanical indifference, caring little for the means by which the object nearest my heart was to be brought about. And this was the reason why, when in the evening I again attended mademoiselle de Lammenais in her dressing-room, and she insisted upon my accompanying her to the Marquise de Pauvenay's, I attempted to resist, being sensitive on the subject of my individual honor, at the same time that I cared less than nothing for gaiety and show. I did not like the idea of being exhibited as a convert; feeling, as I did, that nothing was more probable than my ultimately becoming disgusted with the whole system of the Romish church. I was indignant with the fate that seemed to deny me all freedom of action; that forced upon me conduct unworthy of myself; that familiarized me with compromises, to which I could only stoop with a proud heart and a stiff neck. I went to madame la Marquise de Pauvenay's, however; and, after successfully resisting mademoiselle de Lammenais' attempt to adorn me with some of her own ornamental costume, I was pronounced to be perfect in my own simple muslin dress. As we proceeded in the carriage, and mademoiselle de Lammenais spoke of the enthusiasm with which

she anticipated I should be received, I could only hope that she was miscalculating: but I supposed it was the fact, as I had been informed, that religion was just than the fashion; for I was carressed, and questioned, and made so much of by the brilliant company assembled at the hôtel de Pauvenay, that, with all my equinimity and presence of mind, I did not acquit myself in a manner at all satisfactory to my own notions of what was right. In a scene so animated and so new to me, however, I saw much that irresistibly took me out of myself. In this assemblage of the highly-educated, the noble, and the wealthy, I found many of the elements that made up the littleness of the inferior people whom I had encountered at Mrs. Brown's. Youth did not impress me with its freshness, nor age with its decorum. There seemed to me to be an abundance of giddiness, and affectation, and jaded sentiment, and hot-house enthusiasm, that was scarcely fitted for every-day use. The two persons who struck me as an exception were M. de Beausset, who stood aloof and spoke little, and seldom approached mademoiselle de Lammenais, and our hostess, the Marquise de Pauvenay. The latter a fine-looking woman of about forty, with noble features, a profusion of dark hair, and large black eyes, that seemed to hide a world of sorrow in their troubled depths, interested me so much, that I could not help following her movements with my eyes. Perfectly courteous and attentive to all her guests, there was a restlessness about her, perhaps apparent only to myself; and I fancied I discovered the source of her uneasiness. The marquis himself was a handsome, manly-looking personage, of about her own age; and wherever he was, there her eyes wandered furtively, or rested for a moment with an agony of expression, that sent a sympathetic thrill through my whole frame. The marquis, on his side, never noticed her, even by a glance. I guessed that there was some estrangement between them; and that wealth, and rank, and splendor, had failed to bring satisfaction to that yearning woman's heart.

The chief purposes for which this brilliant company had assembled, appeared to be flirtation and the discussion of the prevailing topics of the day. Conversations on litera-

ture, religion, even politics, were going on all round me; and certainly the French are a people who excel in the ephemeral brilliancy of spoken words. There was a vast deal of wit, agreeably veiling some profundity; and the vivacity and earnestness with which even trifles were discussed, imparted a certain importance to them. I could not help being amused, though my thoughts would wander back and onward, and though I was so much absorbed in observing the Marquise de Pauvnay. I was myself particularly seized upon by a devout old lady, the Comtesse de Reuilly, whose style of dress shocked me, exhibiting her withered person in a manner that took away all reverence for her years. As she admonished me, especially on the subject of relics and pilgrimages, I could not help wondering that religion had not taught her more decorum. I had been chained to her side for an hour or two, when M. de Beausset considerately advanced, and asked if I would walk for a minute into the fresh air. I gladly took his offered arm, and he led me out upon the balcony filled with evergreens. It was a still night and the moon was shining brilliantly.

"What do you think of us by this time," he said, "now that you are become one of us?"

"I am not at all sure that I have become one of you, in the sense you mean. I think that you are a people who like to be flattered, and that, therefore, the less I say of you at present the better. I must search further."

"Into what we are all surface."

"Into your religion, if you have any. What was a mockery in England seems to be a mummery here. I fear I am a born sceptic."

"Did you say this to the comtesse de Reuilly just now?"

"No; I heard all and said little. What could I say to a very foolish old woman, who evidently does not herself understand what she is talking about?"

"So you reserve for me the honor of being the depository of your worse than heretical notions?"

It was a fact, that I should not have spoken so decidedly to any one else. There was no frippery about M. de Beausset: it was impossible to meet his frank look and not trust

him implicitly. Besides, I felt pretty sure that he was something more than heretical himself. His words, however, annoyed me a little, and I attempted to draw my arm from his. He held my hand and detained it.

"Marguerite," he said—"others name you so, and I have the first right—I have heard you with mingled sensations of pain and pleasure. The pain is uppermost, but I rejoice in being able to honor you as I have wished to do since our first meeting. You will remember I told you, that good Christians were rare articles to be met with anywhere. As to Christianity itself, why——"

He paused, perhaps wanting to hear my opinion of it.

"It seems," I said, "to be a subtle spirit, that evaporates in mortal hands."

"It was not meant to be moulded by hands or directed by heads, but to be firmly treasured up by the heart," said M. de Beausset. "We should not so scramble after these shadows of it, these mockeries and mummeries, if we had not an inborn consciousness that there was a substance somewhere. I am only a blind leader of the blind; I do no one thing that I feel to be right; yet I cannot shut my eyes to the fact, that noble men and women have adorned life and glorified death through this same faith, and that without it altogether we should be infinitely more degraded than we are. As to the examples that meet our eyes in daily life, I, for one, don't feel myself qualified to cast the first stone at them."

"You are wandering away from the question and dwindling me down to a mere sectarian Pharisee, M. de Beausset," I said. "I have received so much individual kindness since I came to France, that I should be ungrateful, indeed, if I did not feel and acknowledge it. But I shall begin to be despicable to myself if I continue to receive this kindness on the condition of acknowledging my belief in monstrosities, that only excite my astonishment and disgust, of acquiescing in oppressions that rouse my indignation. I would rather live a free and vagabond life with José and Morgotte than keep my place here on such terms."

"Ah, I dreaded coming to this!" said M. de Beausset, shrugging his shoulders. "Well! run away from us, as

you did from the English; where will you go? where to find the impossibility you seek, to be free from the trammels of popular practice or belief? You must try to put up with us as we are, Marguerite. Absurdities are only absurdities after all—laugh at them. As to oppressions, never attempt to set yourself up as a redresser of wrongs."

"Well," I said, after a pause, "it matters little; for my sojourn here must, under any circumstances, be very brief."

"Why, you don't mean to say that you are going to run away from us in reality?"

"Most assuredly I shall, so soon as I can raise sufficient means to carry me where I alone wish to be."

"To England again?"

"Oh, no, no! God forbid I should be forced to return there! To another land, far away over the wide sea; the land of which I dream day and night."

"You strange, wild girl!" said M. de Beausset, grasping my hand till the pressure pained me, "who gave you this mighty power of attracting, and bewildering, and torturing me, from which I cannot free myself? Would to God we had never met!"

He dropped my arm as he spoke, and I hastily re-entered the room alone. The Chevalier de Roubillac, to whom I had previously been introduced, conducted me to a seat, and engaged me in a lengthened conversation. I suppose I answered coherently, for I afterwards heard that he had expressed a high opinion of my understanding; but my mind was in a perfect tumult while I spoke. This M. de Beausset, who had haunted me so long, as one to whom I owed a large debt—to whom I could speak as I could speak to none other—had certainly acquired a power of some kind over myself, and of which his impassioned words first made me conscious. They conveyed a meaning terrible to him and me, but they sent a thrill of wild delight through my very soul that I made no attempt to free myself from. This exquisite pleasure, in the midst of so much pain, mastered me; and I hoarded it as no miser ever hoarded his gold.—With the knowledge that I could never be anything to him more than I was, even if he had himself been free to choose, I could not help exulting in the thought that I had created

an interest in his heart for which I was indebted to no power out of my own hands. The same sympathy of soul that drew us together was henceforward to keep us apart; but there was to me almost too exquisite a pleasure in the very suffering of this situation. I no longer felt my utter desolation, for even here there was one human being—and he one of the noblest of his kind—who must think of me perforce, and without indifference. The very impossibilities about us seemed to sublimate his hopeless attachment. We should honor each other the more in the mutual avoidance, that would leave unsevered the strong cord that should have bound us to each other. This, then was my destiny; and I thought it a glorious one. I had been loved for myself alone, and could I bear the image of one, whose nature I believed to be noble, in my heart to the grave?

I was not deceived in my estimate of M. de Beausset, who avoided me as much as possible. On my part, I was more eager than ever to raise the means of going out to Australia; and mademoiselle de Lammenais, together with the comtesse, with whom I was to remain after the marriage of the former, if I chose, tendered me so liberal a salary, that I hoped to be able to accomplish my object in twelve months: a long time to look forward to, and yet not long, considering under what circumstances I had conceived this plan of working my way to my grand-father.

I passed most of my time with the comtesse, who liked the society of young people, and who could not often command that of her grand-daughter, who seemed to be mistress of her own time and actions. What with the reminiscences of her gallantries and other records of her early days, and the odd devices and encumbrances of her fits of devotion, the comtesse kept me pretty well amused. I could not help pitying her very much. She seemed to live in a constant terror of her own old age. It seemed to me more of a bugbear to her than the hell or the purgatory, for exemption from which she labored so continuously and hardly. She would not look at her own face in the glass, and frequently asked Maraude and myself if we thought she looked so *very* old. Her hands were a constant source of lamentation to her. With all her cumbrous contrivances for salva-

tion, her spiritual trust appeared to be small, for she had a great horror of dying; and this state of mind magnified her small ailments, so that she fancied herself near death sometimes twice in a day. Then it was at once ludicrous and distressing to hear her alternately asking the intercession of the saints, and calling upon us to assure her that she was not so ill as she thought she was. To me she became very much attached, because I was a patient listener, and did not care to leave her. She rehearsed my good qualities to every visitor, and blessed the saints and mother Madeleine for having provided her with a companion so suited to her every way. In my constant and close communication with her I learned a good deal of the Leigh family, of which I had been in ignorance. Herself and lady Leigh were the daughters of the late, and sisters of the present earl of——; and the comtesse had become estranged from her family through her marriage and subsequent conversion to the church of Rome. She spoke of the frigid, puritanical piety of lady Leigh, with ridicule at one time, and at another with horror; and mentioned some of the enormities of General and Colonel Leigh (who, she said, were well matched,) that made my blood run cold. These revelations, however, her dislike to these people, and her kindness to myself, and the consciousness that some of her blood flowed in my veins, by whatever means, served to attach me to her, silly and unprincipled as she was. I quitted her with real reluctance, when mademoiselle de Lammenais would have her own way and drag me out into society. In that society M. de Beausset never approached to address me; and both in her own home and elsewhere, wherever I encountered her, the Marquise de Pauvenay absorbed my interest. She had evidently been stricken by some mortal sorrow. She was wandering about with the arrow of death in her heart. I one day mentioned her to the comtesse.

"Ah, yes!" she said, "you are right; the poor marquise has something to put up with. She loves her husband, and he hates her; everybody knows that, and that de Pauvenay is the greatest libertine in France. He is really bad, for he hates his children, too; and there are three of them, poor things! shut up in an old château many leagues off. He

I thought he alluded to the persecution of the Chevalier Roubillac. "You magnify trouble and danger, sir," I said. "The comtesse quite approves of what I have done, and she can protect me."

"Yes, from a husband; neither she nor the priests wish you to marry. They have at present another destiny for you. Will you trust yourself with me a little further down this walk?"

I placed my work upon the table and rose up; he seemed to have something serious to communicate to me, and I did not hesitate about learning what it was. As he passed, he gave the embroidery a contemptuous toss.

"For whom amongst the blessed do you design this finery?" he asked.

"It is the comtesse's gift to our Lady of Loretto," I said.

"Well, kings ere now have employed themselves in making petticoats for the same personage. But the comtesse—I thought she devoted herself exclusively to our Lady of Cleury. Perhaps she considered it necessary to propitiate the other lady. You see there are above a score of them, and to offend one is to offend all."

"For shame, M. de Beausset!" I said; "you profess this faith, and you ridicule it!"

"Think as hardly of me as you like, only don't take me for a fool," he said. "I could not bear that from you." He led me into a retired and shady walk, and then drew forth a long scroll of paper.

"Cast your eyes over this, and be quick," he said. "You see your name written here—'Margaret Payne:' and what follows."

This was what followed the name: "Bold, ambitious, strongly inclined to unbelief; enterprising, and particularly sensitive to kindness. Must be trusted with some power as a motive, and must discern good in it. Unmanageable here, and must be removed."

Poor me! could it be a fact that the Church had thus been occupied in analyzing my character all this time? I lifted my eyes to M. de Beausset.

"How did you get possession of this?" I asked.

might not be filled up;—no tidings of those I loved—no hope of them. Dreams brought the lost back to me, but they were never happy ones. I stood with them amid battles and shipwrecks, or we were starving and shivering together in darkened rooms or on bleak heaths, or I was kneeling and weeping by their dying beds. The thoughts of the day were scarcely better than this, though the old conviction that I must go on was still strong upon me. What was the something that I felt it imperative upon me to reach?

During these months I had frequently been told that I was handsome. I had, to my great annoyance, a number of admirers, of whom the Chevalier de Roubillac was the most persevering. He was a man of middle age, almost gigantic in stature, and his bushy, black whiskers and mustachios, gave a fierce expression to an otherwise rather unmeaning face. This gentleman, who was distinguished by great fluency of speech, but whose character did not seem to be remarkable any way, had been in the army under Louis and Charles, and he was in the army still. He was, moreover, of a good family, and possessed an estate. He took it into his head to propose formally for my hand.

I gave him the only answer that I had to give, for no privation and dependence on the one hand, or prospect of advantage on the other, could have induced me to bestow my hand where my heart was indifferent, even if the many other obstacles in the way had not existed. The chevalier, however, was one of those monotonously wearying people, who can neither be offended, nor alarmed, nor convinced; and with a patience quite incompatible with ardor, he continued to intercede and hope on. He had made his intentions known to the comtesse, and had asked her to use her influence in his behalf; but the comtesse took my part, and expressed her pleasure at his dismissal. Mademoiselle de Lammenais, on the contrary, considered it an advantageous offer, and marvelled at my rejection. She held out all kinds of inducements to bring me, as she said, to reason.

"You say you are too young,—*ma foi!* it isn't with us as it is with you English, who fall at once into slavery and dowdyism on getting married. Here marriage confers a

liberty rarely to be enjoyed by the single. Few young ladies are so independent as I am, for I am peculiarly placed. When once you are married, the number of your admirers will increase ten-fold. These are great advantages,—don't you see?"

"Advantages of which I could make no use," I said.—"Such conduct seems to me immoral; it shocks me; my education has been different, and I cannot alter these views."

Mademoiselle de Lammenais laughed at me heartily. "What a solemn face!" she said; "how really awful this prudery is! There is less of actual sin amongst us with our free manners than amongst you with all this pretence of sanctity. Here comes M. de Beausset, who, of all men I know, is most deserving of an English wife. He himself has a few humdrum notions that almost frighten me."

We were seated during this conversasion in an arbor in the garden. I had not seen M. de Beausset to speak to him for nearly three months—not since the night when we were on the balcony at the Marquise de Pauvenay's. As he now approached, I arose, and attempted to go away, but mademoiselle de Lammenais stopped me.

"Another of your English notions," she said; "you fancy you may be an interruption to some necessary billing and cooing, while, in fact, if you leave us together, we shall be sure to quarrel. Is it not so, Victor? Marguerite has been making me laugh; she is horrified at the idea of having admirers after she is married."

"A singular young lady, indeed!" said M. de Beausset. "Does she fancy she can always be in love with her husband?"

"Not quite so mostrous as that," said mademoiselle de Lemmenais; "she only supposes she ought to be. If one could cure her of these notions, there might be hope for the poor chevalier."

"My notions of any kind would make no difference in that respect," I said, quietly continuing the work I was upon— a new robe for our Lady Loretto.

"I never met with any one so obdurate, so unimpressible," said mademoiselle de Lammenais. "She will neither please others nor be pleased herself. Positively, a conquest seems

to afford her no pleasure. I have an idea that she has left her heart behind her in England."

I looked up in surprise. "Indeed, you mistake," I said; "in England I had something else to do and think of."

"Well, don't look so horrified," said Mademoiselle de Lammenais, laughing. "One might almost imagine that in England you consider being in love a species of crime."

"Circumstances may make it so."

"But—bless me! you're not married already, are you, Marguerite?"

"No, certainly not," I said, smiling at the oddness of the idea. "I am not, and I never shall be."

"What folly! What a singular freak in a girl young and handsome! M. de Beausset, you have been very surly of late; you never help me as you should. You neglect your protégée too; why do you not advise her for her good on this momentous occasion?"

M. de Beausset, after saluting us politely, had seated himself, and was now leaning on the arbor table, apparently watching my work. The question made him start, and he threw himself back.

"I advise!" he exclaimed; "I have never been able to advise myself for any good purpose. Mademoiselle Marguerite is the best judge of what is for her own happiness."

"How cold and precise! Do you know, Victor, that you are very English in your notions, and that——"

"And that you are very French in yours. Yes, I have had a glimmering of the fact. I believe I spoke to you on this very subject last night."

"Oh, if you are going to lecture me again I must positively run for it. I have a hundred things to do this morning, and you two will get on very well together."

She tripped away, and I turned pale with fright as I hastily rose to follow her. M. de Beausset held my arm, and detained me.

"Don't fear me, Marguerite," he said; "I will say nothing that you ought not listen to, but you *must* hear me.—You do not yet understand your position here, which is becoming dangerous. I have brought you into this trouble, and I must help you out of it."

I thought he alluded to the persecution of the Chevalier Roubillac. "You magnify trouble and danger, sir," I said. "The comtesse quite approves of what I have done, and she can protect me."

"Yes, from a husband; neither she nor the priests wish you to marry. They have at present another destiny for you. Will you trust yourself with me a little further down this walk?"

I placed my work upon the table and rose up; he seemed to have something serious to communicate to me, and I did not hesitate about learning what it was. As he passed, he gave the embroidery a contemptuous toss.

"For whom amongst the blessed do you design this finery?" he asked.

"It is the comtesse's gift to our Lady of Loretto," I said.

"Well, kings ere now have employed themselves in making petticoats for the same personage. But the comtesse—I thought she devoted herself exclusively to our Lady of Cleury. Perhaps she considered it necessary to propitiate the other lady. You see there are above a score of them, and to offend one is to offend all."

"For shame, M. de Beausset!" I said; "you profess this faith, and you ridicule it!"

"Think as hardly of me as you like, only don't take me for a fool," he said. "I could not bear that from you." He led me into a retired and shady walk, and then drew forth a long scroll of paper.

"Cast your eyes over this, and be quick," he said. "You see your name written here—'Margaret Payne:' and what follows."

This was what followed the name: "Bold, ambitious, strongly inclined to unbelief; enterprising, and particularly sensitive to kindness. Must be trusted with some power as a motive, and must discern good in it. Unmanageable here, and must be removed."

Poor me! could it be a fact that the Church had thus been occupied in analyzing my character all this time? I lifted my eyes to M. de Beausset.

"How did you get possession of this?" I asked.

"I am indebted for it to the ingenuity of José who has peculiar opportunities for helping his friends who may be in distress. You may rest assured that it was stolen, or it would never have come into my possession."

"Ah! I shall bring you into trouble," I said. "How unhappy all this is! But there is a remedy: I must fly from this place."

"You must not!" said M. de Beausset. "Have a little pity upon me, Marguerite—you will drive me mad! This missive had to be conveyed, with others, to Rome, and the messenger is yet detained on the road. You are perfectly safe for some time to come. When there is danger to you, I shall know it, for I am on the watch. Will you trust to me, and remain quiet for the present?"

I was not so much alarmed on my own account by this danger, which only threatened to make a tool of me. Now that I was forewarned, what did it matter? I readily gave my promise to M. de Beausset on one condition.

"I can remain without any fear, if you will leave me to my own resources. If you interfere and involve yourself, you will force me to fly."

"And you will not accept any service at my hands, Marguerite? You despise me, as you do others."

"You do me injustice," I said. "You should see the propriety of my request."

"I am already a martyr to propriety," said M. de Beausset; "I hate the word! Promise, then, that you will not shrink from asking my help, if you need it."

But I knew that I *should* shrink from asking it; and I remained silent, and hurried on to the arbor to fetch my work.

"This is cruel and unkind," said M. de Beausset. "Why may I not be your friend?—Because I am fettered by this unhappy engagement, which is burdening me to death? You understand how I am punished, and you add to my misery!"

"Do not force me to despise you, indeed," I said, sternly and sorrowfully; "you, whose remembrance I would preserve in my heart without a stain."

Oh, how I dreaded being compelled to believe evil of this man!

M. de Beausset fell into one of the seats, and buried his face in his hands. I took up my work, and so left him.

CHAPTER XVI.

THERE was a grand fete to be given at the Marquis de Pauvenay's, and Mademoiselle de Lammenais insisted upon my accompanying her. I acquiesced the less reluctantly, because I felt an uneasy interest in the poor marquis, that, in the midst of my other troubles, allowed me no rest. It is natural that the unfortunate should feel an interest in one another, but something beyond this common attraction seemed to draw me towards this forlorn and most unhappy woman: I could not help thinking that some dreadful catastrophe would be the consequence of feelings so deep and so terribly roused. Her noble figure, distinguished above all others in the crowd—her troubled, though usually calm, countenance—her wandering eyes, so often flashing, as if from some inward fire,—fascinated my gaze, so that I could observe little else when she was near me. The marquis, gallant and attentive to every lady present, without being particular, so far as I could observe, appeared at all times to be oblivious of her presence.

I must here mention, in grateful remembrance of Mademoiselle de Lammenais, that with all her faults,—rather the result of education than of any native depravity of heart,—she was generous, and affable, and confiding; free from the offensive pride that exhibits itself in self-exaltation, or in oppressing others; wishful, if not anxious, for the happiness of all around her; liberal to excess. In a word, she was not capricious; and she only became little by forgetting herself. To me, dependent and unknown, and, above all, flattered as I was in the society to which she introduced me—her sisterly manner never changed. She was constantly

giving me presents of dress, that enabled me to hoard up my salary; and she seldom willingly went abroad without me.

All this inspired me, by degrees, with a grateful attachment that made me anxious for her happiness with M. de Beausset. Emotions had been roused within me that made me feel like a culprit in her presence: I crushed them out, and felt happier for the effort. He had loved her at some former period, and her own frivolity had most probably estranged him. I thought it would be well repaying the debt I owed M. de Beausset if I could restore this merely thoughtless girl to him and to herself.

And therefore I frequently spoke of what I considered wrong in her manner, both to M. de Beausset and abroad, with the freedom that she allowed me. On these occasions she unfortunately had the laugh of her prejudices against me.

"Ma chére Anglaise," she would say, "don't attempt to freeze me with these cold decorums of your nation! You forget that I was born nearer the sun, and that I have as much right to exercise my privileges as you have. You see, all this is inevitable: you continue a puritan and I a coquette."

I could get nothing more out of her; but there was this satisfaction in being with Emillie de Lammenais, that she did not care about my being anything more than the puritan she called me. Indeed, she openly asserted that it was a shame to spoil me by attempting to make a Catholic of me, perfect as I was in my original state. In her presence, therefore, I felt freed from every restraint, and this drew us more closely together. On this occasion of our attending the fete at the Marquis de Pauvnay's, she was more than usually anxious about our dress. She wished us to be dressed alike, and, to my surprise, had provided for this arrangement. There was still a wide difference in our appearance. She was much shorter and more slender than myself; her very fair skin and braided flaxen hair were remarkable, while I was a brunette with heavy masses of dark hair curling naturally. I ineffectually attempted a remonstrance, for I considered that there was an impropriety in this outward

show of an equality that did not exist. I appealed to her in every available way, feeling that I should attract more observation and criticism than would be pleasant to myself; but mademoiselle de Lammenais coaxed and entreated (she never commanded) till I was almost ashamed of my refusal; and so she had her way.

As I lost sight of mademoiselle de Lammenais almost immediately on my entrance into the crowded saloons of the hôtel de Pauvenay, I soon dismissed from my mind the circumstance of our being dressed alike. She left me in charge of Madame de Vigny, a lady with whom I had some previous acquaintance, and she turned me over to the old Comtesse de Reuilly. Seated by her side, I looked vainly round for the marquis, and my companion soon brought me back to myself.

"My dear," she said, "how long do you intend to keep up this mystery that is puzzling us all? Don't you think you have teased us long enough?"

"About what, madam?"

"How innocent you look! About your real name, and birth, and connexions, to be sure. All Paris is asking, 'Who is this Marguerite who is seen and talked of everywhere, and yet whom nobody knows?' It is understood that the Chevalier Roubillac is your suitor, and people ask, 'With whom is he about to allay himself?' All this is very natural, you know. There is a rumor that you are the daughter of an English lord; others say that you are related to the de Lammenais; for my part, I don't see the use of being mystical on the subject. You are young, and this is the fault of your advisors."

"Indeed madam," I said, hastily, "you mistake. There is no mystery, no need for any. I have no pretension; I am humbly born; I am even less than I seem to be, because I owe everything about me here to the kindness of my protectors. I explained all this to the Chevalier Roubillac when I declined the honor he intended me. I assure you this is the simple truth"

"Ah, it is a charming little romance, and I don't take this for the dénouement," said the comtesse. "I must wait longer, I see.

This distressed me very much. I could bear to receive courtesies on my own account; I was proud of the unhappy protectors of my childhood, though I felt the impossibility of proclaiming them to the world: but to be taken for what I was not, and received in society upon the strength of supposition, seemed to give an air of imposture even to the small place I occupied that appalled me. Surely this idea was not general? surely it was not entertained by my benefactors themselves? Yet now, when I was set thinking on the subject, even this seemed possible. I had been met with in an extraordinary manner; I had only spoken of the past as too painful for myself to dwell upon; and my education—perhaps my very appearance—might have given the idea that I was well born. M. de Beausset himself had probably fallen into this mistake. Miserable misconception! How I might be depreciated in the opinion of all these people by the knowledge of what I really was!

This kind of position revealed to me my own powers of self-sustainment; but it was less easy to support the body than the soul. To what sordid and petty necessities did I owe most of the sufferings of my past life! what trouble from the same source still lay before me! The glittering throng oppressed me with its gaiety, and as I had not yet been found by the Chevalier Roubillac, there seemed to be a good opportunity for gliding out into the garden, which I could easily do by way of the balcony. It was a moonless night, and rather cold, for it had rained during the day. I wandered into the remotest alleys, not thinking of the impropriety of being there alone, or of the minor folly of lingering in the wet with my thin shoes. It at length occurred to me that I might be missed, and I was returning by the way of an arbor not far from the house, when I became aware that some persons were in it, by whom I must be seen if I passed, while if I retraced my steps, I should have to go a long way round. I had come close upon the spot in the midst of the trees and thick shrubs that surrounded it, and I could not be mistaken in the two voices that met my ear during the brief pause I made. They were those of a man and a woman, and the woman was sobbing bitterly.

"Come, come, Emellie," said the man, whom I knew at

once to be the Marquis de Pauvenay, "you will expose yourself to-night if you give way like this. I promise, on my honor, to take you away the instant I have completed my preparations. Don't be alarmed: I have a plan that will save us both."

"Oh, I am so wretched, Louis," sobbed his companion; "I cannot remain here, it will kill me!"

Consternation chained me to the spot on which I stood; I leaned against one of the trees, breathless and shivering. I only heard one other sentence. The marquis said, "Quick, quick! this is folly!" and the next minute he came out and rushed past me so close that he almost touched my dress. Emillie de Lammenais also presently passed from the arbor, and walked quickly down the path leading to the balcony. I remained a long time where I was, feeling faint, sick, and frightened. I might have remained half the night, if some one had not seized my arm roughly. I started from my reverie in fresh terror, and saw the gipsy girl, Morgotte.

"What brought *you* here to be a spy upon them?" she asked in a savage tone. "Do you pretend yet that you care nothing for M. de Beausset, though you are busying yourself with the doings of his mistress?"

"I am here quite by accident, Morgotte," I said.

The girl burst into her wild laugh.

"Say that to them that will believe you," she said. "I hate you! and I know that you are full of deceit!"

As she rushed away I roused myself. I had certainly no business there; I was laying myself open to suspicions, and I had no right to expect any one to believe me in a matter in which I had exhibited such a want of prudence. I hastened back by the longer, but more retired path, which terminated in a large conservatory. The door was open, and I knew there was a communication this way into the house. In the interior I saw a distant glimmering of radiance, that, falling amid the exotic flowers and fruits, and many-shaped leaves, produced a variety of strange lights and shadows. As I moved amidst them I heard other steps, stilthily tracking mine, I thought; but on looking round I just caught a glimpse of Morgotte and the marquise entering one of the sections of the conservatory where the darkness was unbro-

ken. Was it possible that this unhappy woman had submitted to the degradation of making an outcast girl a spy upon her husband's actions, and the depositary of her own dishonor? What wretchedness! what an accumulation was here of sin, and shame, and pollution! All the produce of one bad man's heart, and that man so admired, so honored by the world! In what frightful outburst of human agony and outraged trust would it all end!

I re-entered one of the saloons, and as I was looking round for the Comtesse de Reuilly I perceived mademoiselle de Lammenais chatting gaily to a circle of gentlemen, apparently full of life and spirits, and with no trace of her late agitation visible in her countenance. I shrank back; I did not feel able just then to encounter her, and I fell into the hands of the Chevalier Roubillac.

"I have been inquiring and looking for you everywhere," he said; "what was it that spirited you away? You know that, in spite of your cruelty, I feel lost out of your presence."

He found me a seat beside the deaf old Comtesse de Bayard, who looked on this gay scene through her spectacles. It struck me as something very melancholy, this clinging of the decaying senses to the transitory enjoyments of earth. The Comtesse de Lammenais had a horror of making a public exhibition of her wrinkles and infirmities; but in her own way she destroyed all feeling of reverence in others, and was miserable in herself. How different these old people were to my grand-father, with his earnest piety regulating all the conduct of his life; to Aunt Betsy, with her strength of mind, and sturdy principle to do right, let the sacrifice be what it would! The more I saw of the world, the more I honored these two, from whom I was, perhaps, separated for ever.

As I sat listening to the chevalier, and parrying his compliments as well as I could, I had a full view of the circle surrounding mademoiselle de Lammenais. The marquis was there, talking as gaily as the rest. I looked round in vain for the marquise. She was, perhaps, not yet capable of bringing her agony into that gay scene. These new interests were filling my heart with a profounder and more

purifying sorrow. I was lifted out of self, and, during the process, I learned that mine had not been the greatest of human trials. I might have thought that I had much to be thankful for; but that, I fear, did not occur to me. I was yet far from God, though drawing nearer to him through his creatures.

The chevalier was called from my side, and a few minutes afterwards M. de Beausset approached me.

"You look weary," he said; "I have been observing you some time."

"I am weary," I replied; and I lifted my eyes to his pityingly.

"Ma belle Marguerite," he said, seating himself beside me, "those large, melancholy eyes of yours always make my heart ache. They possessed this influence over me from the first. To-night they are more than usually powerful: there is a look in them, too, as if you had something to reveal to me. Is it so, Marguerite?"

"Nay, it is nothing," I said, turning away.

"Nothing! what a blank word! The soul will not be satisfied with this nothing, which is the sole fruit of its wishes and its hopes. I feel to-night as one in a dry desert, who has no chance of reaching the spring that might quench his thirst,—the verdure that might assure him of life. I am altogether in an atmosphere of decay, and rottenness, and death."

Was this presentiment? I thought so. I felt an invincible repugnance to continue this conversation, which oppressed me more than I could well bear. I was looking round for some one I knew, in order to join them, when the Comtesse de Reuilly beckoned me to approach her.

She took my arm, and led me out of the room and down stairs.

"I think we can rely upon your discretion," she said: "the poor marquise has been seized with a fit. She is better now, and she does not want to disturb her guests. She has asked to see you. There is something very dreadful in this, I'm afraid; something fresh about the marquis, who, between you and me, uses her worse than a dog. I found her, by chance, with a strange, wild-looking girl, who must

have brought her bad news. We must hear all about it, and say nothing."

She led me into a small room adjoining the conservatory, in which we found the marquise, seated and alone. She was deadly pale, and her wild, black eyes, rested upon me, and seemed to look me through.

"You must leave us together, my friend," she said, addressing the Comtesse de Reuilly; "I wish to speak with this young lady alone."

The comtesse looked disappointed: but there was a decision in the tone and look of the marquise that mastered her, and she went out. The marquise locked the door, and motioned me to a seat, and continued standing.

"It is known to you," she said, speaking rapidly, "because it is known to every one, that I am wronged, and that I suffer. Neglect, and reproach, and insolent pity, meet me on all sides, yet I dread inquiring into the extent of this wrong and suffering. My God! I have been degraded! (She unclasped from her wrist, in her strong agony, a costly bracelet and dashed it upon the floor.) I have seen to-night a wandering gipsy girl, who brought me fresh intelligence of my husband's infidelity. I questioned the truth of what she told me as I well might, but she said she could produce another witness—you! I am already acquainted with many who make no scruple of drawing my husband from me; but Emillie de Lammenais!—Oh, my God! it is too horrible!"

She seemed to writhe in the agony of this thought: tossing her arms wildly, winding them about her head, staggering as if she would fall.

"The girl told me you could confirm this to me," she continued, calming herself suddenly. "What have you to say?" I had been sitting, cold and pale with emotion; the presence of her mighty sorrow seemed to paralyse me; I clasped my hands and bowed my head; I felt as if sinking beneath all this distress and shame.

"It is true, then?" she shrieked. Such a strange, wailing almost unearthly cry, accompanied her words, that I looked up in terror. She was on her knees, clasping the back of a chair with both her white arms, beating her head

against it. I went up to her and bent down, and threw my arms about her neck, but she took no notice of me, and continued tossing about in her agonizing grief, so that we frequently nearly fell together. The poor, distracted head! how recklessly she dashed it against anything that came in her way!

In tones, now moaningly low and heart-rending to hear, now fierce with all the violence of her soul's indignation, she poured forth impassioned words, forgetting, perhaps, that she was not alone.

"My children! my poor children! neglected, hated for their mother's sake!—my noble, tender Ernest—my beautiful Louise—my fair-haired little Marie, with her loving heart! Oh, God! why were these given to me?—And this man, whom I have loved so well, he sees and knows it, and he treats me with the cold indifference, the silent contempt, that leave no chance, no hope of change! But thou, O God, that seest my wrongs, wilt avenge me! What is there that I have not suffered at his hands?—outrage in my home, scorn in the world, all my hopes crushed, all my affections blighted, all my feelings worn down by this slavery of insult and grief? Is not this too cruel, oh, my Father, from whom nothing is hidden?—have I not more than I can bear?"

The very exhaustion of her struggles, bodily and mental, at length calmed her; but there seemed no effort in her to rise from the posture she was in. I still bent over her and my tears fell fast.

"I am wearily punished!" she said, lifting her pale, haggard face, and regarding me with her burning eyes. "If this was only a dream and no reality it would still be too bitter. You seem to feel for me, and I thank you, but leave me now. I too will leave this place, full of pollutions. I will no longer struggle for that which is impossible; I will devote myself to my children and we will console one another—we who are hated so unnaturally?"

"Allow me to help you," I said, still bending over her.—She gently put my arm away.

"You will not," she continued, "tell them of this up yon-

der—not now—not till I have had time to reach the home of my children? I ask this."

"Neither now nor at any time will I mention what I have seen and heard to these people," I said.

"God bless you!" said the marquise. "You are young; God preserve you from trial like mine! Don't fancy you can help me otherwise than by leaving me to myself. I must be alone before I can rouse myself. Go, go!"

There was evidently nothing better that I could do for her. I arose in silence, unlocked the door and closed it after me. The Comtesse de Reuilly seized upon me, and was offended because I had nothing to communicate. After another weary hour I entered the carriage with mademoiselle de Lammenais, and we drove home.

I now understood the meaning of a gravity, sometimes amounting to sadness, that I had observed in mademoiselle de Lammenais for the last three weeks. I was very glad that this fit was upon her during our drive, so that she did not speak, and that upon our arrival at the hotel she hastily bade me good night, and dismissed me. I not only could not feel any sympathy for her just then, but fresh as I was from witnessing the grief of the injured marquise, I was sure that my indignation would find a vent some way. M. de Beausset was altogether a minor consideration; indeed, this inevitable separation of the two was so far a happiness for both because they were unsuited to each other, and they knew it, and they could only have been made wretched together by an indissoluble tie. I, who had never been restrained in the expression of my feelings by conventional rules, wondered how I should be able to meet mademoiselle de Lammenais again without giving her some intimation of what I thought and felt. I was quite determined not to go out with her again; and, altogether, it seemed probable that I should have to provide myself with another home.—These thoughts kept me long awake, but I was sleeping when Maraude came to my bedside, and asked me to get up and go to the comtesse, who thought she was dying. I went to her, and found her, as usual, more terrified than really ill; but the physician and father Dessalle were sent for, and we remained up with her. The morning was far

advanced when the physician arrived, and after pronouncing that the comtesse was not in any danger, he drew me out of the room, and told me that a horrible affair had occurred during the night,—the Marquise de Pauvenay had been found murdered in her apartment, and the marquis was arrested on suspicion of being the murderer.

I cannot well describe the way in which I received this news. So many horrors coming upon me at once seemed to freeze up my faculties. I wandered about during many hours, doing things mechanically, hearing a great deal about this murder that had excited the whole population of Paris, and saying little. I was first roused by the comtesse asking me to communicate these tidings to her grand-daughter, who had not yet been disturbed. I shuddered, and declared myself unequal to the task, which was then committed to Maraude. As she went out of the room the comtesse dispatched me to fetch something for her out of the drawing-room. I found M. de Beausset there; he approached me, and held out his hand.

"You look pale and ill" he said; "you have heard of this great misery? Ah! how dreadful it is?"

I had not had time to reply when a terrible shriek from Emillie's chamber reached us. I snatched my hand from his, and hastened to this new scene of terror. Mademoiselle de Lammenais was in strong convulsions, and the physician, who had only lately quitted the house, was again sent for. I felt now for this poor girl, for I knew that her agony had repentance in it. Hers was not a nature to persevere in wilful sin, of which the consequences were so awful, and I felt that her sufferings would be great. For many hours she seemed hovering between life and death, and during that time I never left her. When consciousness and comparative calmness returned, she shrank away from me, and desired to be left with her own maid. It was on the third day after this when mademoiselle de Lammenais, who had not yet been able to leave her bed, requested an interview with M. de Beausset. They were together nearly an hour, and when he left her he quitted the house. The comtesse, with whom I was now altogether confined, complained loudly of the trouble occasioned by this indisposition of her grand-

daughter, until informed by father Dessalle that it was mademoiselle de Lammenais's intention to enter a convent, and devote the remainder of her days to the service of God. This was, at first, a great surprise and shock to her, and it seemed for the moment to rouse her out of her selfishness. She was, however, too much under the influence of the priests to persevere in any decided resistance of this, to her, strange determination. As mademoiselle de Lammenais continued too ill to leave her room, and the comtesse had an idea that it would kill her to move out of her own, which she rarely did, the two did not meet until the day on which the unhappy Emillie quitted her home for the last time.

A fortnight elapsed, and M. de Beausset had never been near the house. It seemed certain that Mademoiselle de Lammenais had confessed her sin to him, and I knew what he must feel at this degredation of one whom he had once loved. Oh, that every woman, before stooping to dishonor, would seriously consider the shame that she is heaping upon others of her sex, whether connected with her or not; the infamy, whose shadow spreads a wide darkness apart from all the sorrow; the example of weakness, of which vice is always ready to take advantage; the indelible stigma upon which it thrives, and which furnishes a theme for its godless wit! Why will not woman be true to herself, knowing how this truth would help to regenerate the world?

I suppose it was the fault of my education that made me feel as if I should be ashamed to look in M. de Beausset's face again. I felt implicated in this dishonor: I said to myself,—Why should any of us be trusted, weak, and trivial, and imbecile, and unprincipled, and wanting in self-respect, as so many are? All this distressed me, apart from any other causes of distress.

Mademoiselle de Lammenais quitted the house without seeing me again. She, however, left a note for me, in which I found these words:—

"MARGUERITE,

"I have not kept faith with M. de Beausset, and I have proved to him the impossibility of our union. He

loves you, and you are worthy of him. Do not refuse to make him happy, if only for the sake of

"EMILLIE DE LAMMENAIS."

Poor Emillie! she did not yet understand how many obstacles to happiness there are in this world. Nothing was more impossible than my union with M. de Beausset. Should I also have to endure the trial of proving this impossibility to him?

The Comtesse de Reuilly and other visitors brought us from time to time all the particulars respecting the murder that had been collected, with perhaps a good deal of intelligence that was imaginary. Many ladies were mentioned as being rendered inconsolable, not by the dreadful end of the poor marquise, but by the danger threatening the reputed murderer; and many anecdotes were related respecting the intrigues in which he had been engaged. If suspicion had ever rested upon Emillie, it of course was not to be repeated in the hôtel de Lammenais; but when I was given to understand that the dress and office of a sister of mercy were considered very convenient for the carrying on of an intrigue, I remembered that Mademoiselle de Lammenais had frequently gone out in the habit at night, and alone. The teaching of her grand-mother, and the example of others, had prepared for her the way to this sin, whose punishment in her case was so heavy.

With regard to the murder itself and the murderer, who was shortly afterwards executed, full particulars respecting both are to be found in the French chronicles of the time to which I am referring. A sudden change in my own affairs compelled me to put aside for a season my interest in others.

I had met once at the convent, and frequently at the hôtel de Lammenais, a M. l'Abbé Roullet, who had labored with father Dessalle for my spiritual advancement. I had nothing to dislike in this man beyond a bold look, which was perhaps natural to him, and which was only to be borne on the supposition that he could not help it. This abbé was more indulgent than father Dessalle, who evidently grew out of patience with my stubborn resistance of ghostly help in

the matter of my conscience. The abbé would laugh at my sometimes freely-expressed opinions, and call me his "little sinner," in a way that greatly encouraged me to sin on.—And, widely as I had separated myself from the truth of God, I was not made of the stuff that can be moulded into any shape. I could put the idea of religion away from me, altogether, as a delusive invention of man, but I could not consent to assist in making a farce of it, pretending belief in what only excited my ridicule, acquiescences in what roused my indignation. It had evidently become a question with these people what they were to do with me, and I wondered why they would not leave me to myself.

CHAPTER XVII.

MADEMOISELLE DE LAMMENAIS had only been gone four days, when the comtesse intimated to me that I might assist her in a very important matter. She had an estate and château in Lombardy, in the latter of which were several valuables that she wished to remove to Paris. Her granddaughter, she said, had intended to have superintended this work, and that being now impossible, she did not know whom to trust except myself. She would supply me with money, and Annette for a companion, and such instructions as I should not mistake. I was also to be accompanied by Baptiste, who would attend to all the arrangements of traveling.

I accepted this commission very eagerly. Paris was becoming oppressive to me on many accounts, and the idea of a long journey, during which I should be my own mistress, besides seeing so much that was new to me, was quite captivating. Preparations were therefore, immediately set on foot, and in less than a week I commenced my journey to Lombardy.

We travelled in our own carriage, with post-horses, to which, as to our accommodations at night when we did not

travel through the night, Baptiste attended. I did not count the days, for every day brought some new object of interest before me. The scenery of Switzerland delighted me, and I enjoyed by anticipation the pleasure of exploring an old château in one of the provinces of the south. I was in high spirits when we at length reached this place, a not very sightly building, half in ruins, situated in a solitary but fertile spot, and in sight of the river Aidge. It was a pleasurable excitement to put up with the rude accommodation we found, for there was no appearance of our having been expected. A very old man and his wife had charge of the château, and besides having nothing to offer us except their own poor fare, there was such a bustle to make the rooms fit for me to enter, that I proffered my own services to help; and, to her great disgust, called upon Annette to do the same. We were fairly beaten altogether in effecting much on the day of our arrival. There were several rooms furnished in a heavy, old-fashioned style, but a century's dust seemed to have settled upon everything, and it was as much as we could do to make one bed-room habitable for Annette and myself. Here, however, we slept soundly, and on the following morning I arose with fresh spirit to pursue my task.

I was struck more than I had been on the previous day with the dilapidation and nakedness of the place. If there was anything valuable, it was as yet out of sight; and it seemed odd that portable valuables should have been left so long in such insecure custody. I, however, did not doubt that all was right, and before opening my sealed instructions, I assisted Annette and the two old custodiers of the place in making one of the sitting-rooms habitable.

It was a very large apartment, scantily furnished with high-backed chairs, and couches, and marble-topped tables, that we thus attempted to reduce to order. In the midst of our labor, Annette threw herself despairingly into a seat.

"You surely don't intend to stop long in this place, Mademoiselle Marguerite?" she said. "Why not look for the treasures at once, if there are any; but I don't believe it. My young lady never mentioned such a thing; never spoke

of coming here; and I'm sure she would have done if she'd thought about it. You see what there is here; I believe it's all a trick."

I was startled; for I remembered that my removal had been recommended by the priesthood. I cast one blank look round me, and then hastened to my bed-room, and broke open my letter of instructions which Baptiste had carried, and which he had only given me that morning. I found it to contain the following sentence, and nothing more:—

"The treasure I send you to seek is the true faith, which that you may find and value properly is the prayer of your friend,

"L. DE L."

I was trapped, then. I could still make nothing of it. I seemed at liberty to run away if I liked, and I was not without money. I returned to the room to look for Annette, and she was gone. I descended to the apartment occupied by Bianca and Andrea, and the old man pointed out to me the carriage of the comtesse, rolling away in the distance. I labored under the disadvantage of not understanding the language of these people, but I knew well enough from their gestures that both Annette and Baptiste had left me.

I was indignant, but I still did not feel any great alarm, though, when I cast my eyes round the country, I saw no other habitation in sight. Feeling the necessity of collecting my thoughts and doing something, I went up stairs again, and sat down and reflected. I had brought everything belonging to me with me; the comptesse had recommended this, as she I said should be detained in Lombardy some time. I saw nothing better for it than to set out seeking my fortune again with such things as I could carry. I could run faster than either of those two old people, therefore there was no fear of my being detained. I was about going up to my bed-room, previous to putting this plan into execution, when on turning round I was startled by the appearance of M. l'Abbé Roullet.

This man, who was upwards of forty, regarded me with a more than usually bold and repulsive look.

"You see we are not inclined to give you up, Marguerite," he said; "by fair means or by foul, you must belong to us. For my part I am quite ready to consult your own happiness and interest, as I shall prove to you."

"You are beginning in a singular way," I said; separating me from those who might have protected me, dragging me into a strange country by a fraud."

"Oh, merely a pious fraud." said the abbé. "Mother Church allows a latitude in cases like yours, and you shall find me still more indulgent to yourself. You laugh at what you call our mummeries—well, you shall laugh on, Marguerite, and I will laugh with you. They *are* mummeries; but he who knows it amongst these people, and who can make his own use of the knowledge, is possessed of a power mighty enough to move nations. You shall participate in this power, Marguerite; you have a bold, free spirit; you were born to rise in the world, and you *shall* rise."

I had not really feared this man till I heard him thus avow his contempt of the creed he professed. Religionless as I was myself, I could place no trust in any man, a comparative stranger to me, who boasted of his freedom from religious restraint. I shrank more than ever from the abbé's bold and now triumphant look.

"You have not read me aright," I said. "If I crave for power it is the power of doing good, not of perpetuating evil. Nothing you could say or do, would engage me in this work. I feel ashamed of my connexion with your church altogether. I here renounce it altogether."

"Here! Do you know where you are—that you are in my power entirely—that you cannot escape me? Marguerite, listen to me and don't be a fool. You are a brave girl, and I admire you; upon my soul, I love you as I never loved woman. I wish to share the fortune of my life with you. Be reasonable, and listen to what I have to say."

"Ah, my God!" I exclaimed, recoiling in horror, "you are a mockery, then, altogether, you and your religion—all, all!"

"Yes, all if you will have it so. What is it that appalls you now? Don't you understand that every cardinal in Italy has a mistress? Bah! why shouldn't they? I wouldn't change you with any one of them. But mind, I am not used to be thwarted, and this pretty affectation of heroic virtue won't pass with me. Do you know this?"

He drew forth my grand-father's pocket Bible, which I imagined to be safe in my trunk. It must have been abstracted on the road. I had always congratulated myself on having kept it safe from observation, both at the convent and at the hôtel de Lammenais; for, besides the written names of my grand-father and all his family, including myself, it contained the name of my native city.

"I first saw this in the convent at Lille," continued the abbé. "I abstracted from it the information I needed, and every particular of your birth and connexions was known before you were consigned to your relative, the Comtesse de Lammenais. The Church was in need of spirits at once earnest and bold, and you were originally designed to assist in carrying on the conversions in England. You are aware how you turned rusty upon our hands. Well, whilst discomfiting others you captivated me. You must be aware that you can maintain no reputable place in the world where your history is known. Being illegitimate you are an outcast by birth, and the crime of your grand-father (whether he is guilty or not is no matter) makes you doubly so. I like you all the better, Marguerite, for these disadvantages, which others would use for your condemnation. I will teach you how to trample upon the neck of this world, that would crush you down with its conventionalism, meaning nothing but the caprice of petty and inglorious power. You shall rule, Marguerite, instead of being ruled; I will show you in what you may become absolute."

I had fallen low enough now. If there was anything in me superior to that stigma of birth in spite of it—if I, indeed, possessed a soul and an inheritance apart from this earthly identity with more of evil and degradation than earth could tolerate, this was the time to show it. From that bold, bad man, I felt myself driven back upon God, and I took my

stand as confidently as if I had never doubted or questioned God's power.

"I have heard you on compulsion," I said, "and we are so far upon an equality that you are compelled to hear me. I loathe, I detest, I abhor you! I throw back your insinuations and your offers alike with scorn! You dare to look on me, judging what I am—speculating on what I am not! I am fresher from the hand of God than you are, and I wield a mightier power—the power of discerning what is iniquitous, and repelling it! You have my answer, let me pass."

"Gently!" said the abbé, putting himself in my way. "You have not heard all that it is essential you should know. In these dominions you are liable to be prosecuted for being found in possession of a Bible. That prosecution means perpetual imprisonment or death. You are even more of an offender than this: you have tried to aid the escape from her vows of a novitiate in the convent at Lille, named Clémence, by conveying a letter for her; and this crime alone makes you liable to a fearful punishment. I hold the fiat in my hands; I can denounce you at any hour."

"Denounce me!" I said; "anything will be preferable to being here and near you!"

"Oh! can you be so scornful, mistress?" he said, seizing my hands, and grasping them so that I had no power of release. "There!" he continued, flinging them from him, "go to your room, and remember that even in physical power I am your superior!"

My superior, indeed, in the latter! I rushed to my room with a new horror upon me. I sought to lock my door, but there was no key. Presently I heard some one come to the door and fasten it outside, and I felt that I was a prisoner.

Then I fell upon my knees, and prayed. I had never contemplated situations in which my own power would not help me. I turned to God, because I could no longer rely upon myself, and there was the consciousness in my own soul that abashed and humbled me. I thought of my grandfather in his tribulations, sustained by his unwavering trust.

How little I had profited by the pious instructions of my childhood and youth!

Whilst I was thus partially drawn to God, I still had a determined reliance upon myself. I took from one of my boxes a pair of sharp-pointed scissors, and hid them in my dress. I thought far less of murdering that man, in an extremity, than of killing a fly, for in this smaller matter I had every inclination to be humane. It was another thing to be *human*, and to battle with the outrages of earth.

I examined my window, as other prisoners have done, but to no purpose. I could not even break my neck out of it, for it would not open. I could entertain no hope of escaping the vigilance of which the abbé had giving me such convincing proofs; nothing was to be expected from his generosity or sense of justice, and everything to be feared from the brute force, even more congenial to his nature, than *finesse*. As so much seemed to be known to him, he had probably seen the expediency of removing me out of the reach of M. de Beausset. He—the kind and the noble—where was he? did he ever dream of me by day or night? did he miss me? These thoughts would come upon me, even in the midst of my terrible distress, and though I knew that we could never be anything to each other.

I was left to such reflections as I had during many hours. At length my door was opened, and a dark-complexioned woman, of about thirty years of age, entered, bringing me some refreshment. I was in the sort of state that urged me to appeal to almost anything bearing about it the impress of humanity; but there was something in the appearance of this woman that kept me silent. I had been a witness of the spiritual slavery of those who are yet allowed a wide latitude in the world; she gave me the idea of this entire subjection, in the absence of every individual desire, or hope, or satisfaction in life. Her face was less animated than that of a galvanized corpse. Her complete spiritual abjectness and worldly indifference seemed to have locked up her faculties, so that there was nothing to appeal to; and the seal of an inflexibility, at once passionless and cruel, was set upon her thin lips. She was the living representative of a creed, essentially dead, which commands obedience to the literal

word enjoining hatred of father and mother, brother and sister, if need be; perfect apathy and passiveness in the execution of its decrees. What I had seen already enabled me thus to comprehend this woman, from whom I had no hope; and driven as I was to God, I still took exceptions to the Christianity that brought forth no better fruits.

The appearance of this woman led me to believe that I was to remain imprisoned where I was, but I was mistaken. At a later hour she returned, and told me in French that M. l'Abbé Roullette wished to speak to me in the apartment where I had before seen him. I went to him as calmly as I could outwardly, with all my faculties so intensely on the alert.

"I hope I see you in a better temper, Marguerite," he said, with a mingled expression of ferocity and gratified malice. "It is hard to teach you what is right, but we must try. To-night you will have to take another journey, therefore prepare yourself. You are going to Vienna, and you must see that though I could detain you here if I liked, I am able to pursue my schemes amid crowds and in open day-light. This is all I have to say to you; and now you may go and prepare yourself."

There was something particularly insolent in this summons merely to receive an imperative order that might have been conveyed to me in another manner. With all his knowledge of human nature, the abbé was mistaken in supposing that he could subdue me by this means, which only made me the more determined to resist. This prospect of going to Vienna rejoiced me; I thought that in a crowded city I should have the chance of making my situation known, and obtaining redress. For the present, therefore, I could afford to refrain myself; I heard him in silence, and returned to my room.

It was late at night—a beautiful summer night—when the woman of whom I have spoken, and Andrea, came to fetch my boxes and to summon me down stairs. I found a carriage in the court-yard of the château, with two horses and a postillion. The abbé himself helped to mount my boxes, and in helping me into the carriage gave my hand a

forced and odious squeeze. The woman followed me, and the abbé seated himself outside. Then we drove off.

The carriage blinds were down, and when I attempted to raise one of them the woman forbade me in a peremptory tone. I sank into a corner of the carriage, and continued my bitter reflections. I would not yet believe that there were any circumstances of life in which courage and resolution might be rendered availless, and I determined to be on the watch for any opportunity that might occur for effecting my release. But it was yet the dead of the night, and there was blank silence round me. When the sun rose and streamed through the windows we were still hurrying on at a rapid pace. At length the carriage stopped.

I lifted the blind before my companion could prevent me and looked out. There was a wide, fertile country, and a solitary house, at which we were changing horses. I dashed my hand through the glass of the window and cut it, and screamed aloud.

"Parbleu! what have we here?" said a strange man's voice.

"Let her alone!" shouted the abbé; "she is a heretic, one that has been convicted of trying to effect the escape of a nun. I am answerable for conveying her to Vienna."

"Ah! that is another matter," said the man, and there was silence again.

Silence without; but I wrestled with my companion in the coach, and broke the window again, and called out louder, and asked to be heard. The abbé opened the coach-door.

"You had better be quieter here," he said "before I subject you to greater restraint. You see how obstinate this heretic is," he continued, appealing to those outside; "I shall be glad to get her out of my hands."

I caught a glimpse of a comely young woman, who seemed to be looking on with much curiosity. I called out to her, and said that the charge against me was false.

"Holy Virgin!" she exclaimed; "what a wretch! See how she persists in her sin!"

"You see you will gain nothing by this conduct," said my companion. "Why don't you be quiet?" The coach-door was at the moment dashed to, and we drove off again.

I sank back in the carriage, more helplessly than before. I had not taken into my consideration that I was in a land of bigots, who would sanction my cruelty practised upon a heretic; that I was amongst slaves who dared not, if they would, resist the mandates of the Church. In spite of my bravery, large tears filled my eyes, and rolled unheeded down my cheeks. I began to think more kindly of England. Oh, I exclaimed, mentally, if I could find myself there once more—there where, at least, I could suffer no oppression like this!

We continued to roll on for hours. There were provisions in the carriage, which my companion asked me to partake of; but I turned away with loathing. I felt myself becoming really ill, and this terrified me more. At length, a sudden backward movement in the carriage, as if it was about to be overthrown, and the report of a pistol, roused me.

"Don't attempt to parley with me, villain as you are!" exclaimed a voice that I knew well; "look to yourself, for at my hands you may expect no mercy!"

The carriage-door was burst open, and M. de Beausset held out his arms towards me. I sprung forward, and fell into them, and clung to him. Oh, how much I forgot in that instant of time!

"My beloved!" he said, clasping me close to him, "fear nothing; I am with you, and your are safe!"

The second report of a pistol roused me. M. de Beausset staggered. A shot had entered his side and the blood gushed over me. I shrieked and looked round. José had just wrenched the murderous weapon out of the abbé's hand, and was beating him about the head and shoulders with it. Jean, M. de Beausset's servant, was wrestling with the postillion. I called to them, but before they came M. de Beausset fell.

I knelt down beside him and tore off my shawl, and asked them to bind it round him. This was done, but the blood still flowed freely.

"Never mind me," said M. de Beausset. "You know what to do, Jean;—convey Mademoiselle Payne from this spot instantly—drive for your life!"

"I will not leave you in this extremity," I said, clasping his hand and bathing it with my tears. "Where can we get help?"

"That's what I want to know," said José, "Ah, you villain!" he continued, turning to the postillion, "can you stand there and see a gentleman die? There's a town only a mile off: monsieur must be driven there at once."

All this time Jean was lamenting over his master, who vainly commanded him to take charge of me; the abbé lay upon the ground stunned, and apparently insensible; and the woman kept her seat in the carriage.

"You dare to disobey me, Jean; and you are killing me!" said M. de Beausset. "Will you attend to what I have said? José, look to this—be quick?"

Jean seemed paralyzed with grief.

"Come, mademoiselle," said José, "you are doing monsieur no good. Here's a carriage we've brought, and you must get into it."

"For God's sake, Marguerite!" said M. de Beausset.—"If they get you to Vienna you are lost! Jean, is this your fidelity? José, where are you? Marguerite!—save, save her!" A sinking paleness overspread his face—he had fainted.

I thought he was dead. I, too, became unconscious, and when sense returned I found myself lying on the floor of a carriage, my head resting upon the seat. I was driven along at a rapid rate, and events came back to me painfully, with an agonizing rush, like that of the blood when circulation has been been stopped. I still believed that M. de Beausset was dead—that he had died to save me—and I, who might not have been allowed to live *for* writhed under the agonized thought of living on in the world *without* him. I could have borne to leave him; but that he should so leave me!

I felt sick unto death; for, besides the agony of my mind, I had tasted no food since the previous day, and now it was late in another day. I felt revived, however, when the carriage at length stopped to change horses, and Jean appeared at the door and assured me, in answer to my first eager inquiry, that we had not left M. de Beausset for dead;

that José remainad with him, and that there was hope of his recovery. He told me I might rest a few minutes, and I entered the small inn before which we were stopping and partook of some refreshment. Then he explained to me that he was provided with a passport, describing me as an English lady traveling to Paris, and that I must answer to this description at the frontier town which we were approaching. All went on well, and we traveled day and night. We had entered France, when one day the carriage stopped, and Luce and one of the gipsy-men came with Jean to the carriage-door.

"Mademoiselle has been inquired for by a gentleman who is stopping yonder with our people," said Luce. "He says she belongs to him, and he is going further to seek her."

"I have my instructions from master about mademoiselle," said Jean, "and I must obey them. What is to be done?"

I questioned Luce and her companion about the appearance of the gentleman, and no doubt remained in my mind that it was Uncle Stephen. I hesitated,—not with any thought of avoiding him, who had journeyed so far to seek me, but I was violently agitated, and when I alighted from the carriage I was compelled to lean upon Luce for support. We were on an open road, surrounded by trees, and nothing more met my view as I looked apprehensively round.

"I am answerable for mademoiselle's safety," said Jean. "I don't like the look of this: we had better drive on."

I was asking Luce how far the encampment of her people was off, when I saw her companion, whom I had not missed, emerging from the trees close beside me. He was accompanied by another, and—ah! how did we two meet! I remember sobbing upon Uncle Stephen's neck, and that he held me with a strong grasp.

"My poor child!" he said, "you have suffered, and you have made us suffer. Oh, you have wrung our hearts, Margaret! But that is past, and I have good news for you."

"I dare not ask for news," I said, without lifting my head.

"You do not deserve to be allowed to ask for anything," said Uncle Stephen. "I will tell you. Aunt Betsy is with God, and I and George attended her to the grave—not a

pauper grave, Margaret. Your grand-father is proved to be innocent, and he will return to England if you and I do not rather join him where he is."

I lifted my head now. "Oh, bless God for him!" I exclaimed.

"Amen! bless God for all things!" said Uncle Stephen, lifting his hat reverently. "This is all I shall tell you now; let me understand how you are situated."

We had been speaking in English, but I called Jean to us, and in French gave an account of my rescue by M. de Beausset. Jean corroborated what I said, in his own way, and expressed great anxiety to return to his master.

"He must be a good master to inspire such affectionate attachment as yours," said Uncle Stephen; "a good man to have performed so meritorious an action. You shall return to him, and bear him my thanks, and an assurance that mademoiselle Margaret is safe and with her friends.—We are two miles distant from the next post town,—you can, perhaps, convey us thither?"

To this Jean gladly consented. My old acquaintances, the gipsies, had gathered round us in large numbers; and as I turned to take leave of them, I briefly acquainted Uncle Stephen with my obligations to José and the rest.—He took from his purse, and gave to be distributed amongst them, a quantity of gold and silver, whose amount quite appalled me. In his joy at my restoration, Uncle Stephen was indulging in one of the fits of extravagant generosity which his means would not bear. When I held out my hand to Morgotte, who amongst others had been eagerly listening to Jean's narrative, she indignantly dashed it aside.

"You could leave him to die!" she exclaimed; "you that have brought him to this! He will find, at last, that the despised Egyptian girl loved him best! I scorn you for this while I rejoice!"

Morgotte's love for M. de Beausset, like every human passion that is genuine and fully developed, had a power in it that commanded attention; if not respect. This outburst of her feelings made me for an instant quail, and look little in comparison; but I had to deal with realities,

and wish what I might, and suffer what I might, there was only one certain course for me to pursue.

While it was satisfying to my own love and my gratitude to know that I had forgotten my danger in his, and that I had only left him involuntarily, I felt that our separation was right, and necessary for the peace of both. Love him more than ever I did, and my anxiety about him was an agony to me; but I prayed that we might never meet again, and I believed that the sorrow, whose very intensity served to sustain me, would eventually impart to my character the stability and quiet that would better fit me for the battle of life.

When we arrived at the next town, Uncle Stephen wrote a letter of thanks to M. de Beausset, which he committed to Jean's charge. He also gave to the latter his address in London, and desired to be made acquainted with his master's situation; but when he offered money, Jean respectfully declined it. He said his instructions had been to convey me to Antwerp, to a Madame Schomberg, a cousin of M. de Beausset's, who was a married lady and a Protestant, and in whose house I should have found a safe asylum.

We dismissed Jean with thanks, and did not resume our journey till the next day. As we sat together in the evening, Uncle Stephen entered further into the particulars of what had occurred during my absence. His sister was dead, and George had gone out to Australia, taking with him young Henry Elliott.

"George drooped very much after you first left us," said Uncle Stephen; "but eventually your example, or the contents of your letter, which the dog would never show me, seemed to rouse him to exertion. Where he is, I have full confidence that he will rise in the world, and feel happier in himself."

I had asked Uncle Stephen how he contrived to trace me.

"Thereby hangs a tale," he replied. "You must wait for a full explanation till we arrive in London. Thus much, however, I can tell you. When I was first furnished with the knowledge that you had proceeded to France, I made what haste I could to Calais, where you were remembered

through the circumstance of having lost a purse. I was directed to a mother Meulen, who gave me a vast deal of information. Through her I was enabled to trace you to Clerons; thence in company with the gipsies to Mouscron and Lille; to the convent, and the hôtel de Lammenais. I proceeded instantly to Paris; but the Comtesse de Lammenais declared that you had left her, and that she did not know where you could be found. Then I made inquiries about the country for the gang of gipsies, and met with them yesterday night. They told me that you had been entrapped away, and that a certain M. de Beausset had gone to your rescue. I had intended to follow in the wake of this M. de Beausset, when I fortunately met with you. Here is material for a marvellous story, and I shall expect you to narrate it to me faithfully."

And faithfully I did narrate it, entering into my feelings of various kinds; my inclination to become a Roman Catholic till the absurdities of that religion drove me back, before I had been quite revolted by the mockeries and the oppressions which it sanctions. If I touched lightly on the attachment of M. de Beausset, Uncle Stephen did not seem to require much enlightenment from me upon the subject.

"Ah, I always feared George was not the right individual for you," he said, smiling. "Never mind, it is all ending right. M. de Beausset is a fine, generous-hearted fellow, who seems to act as if he had the fear of God before his eyes. He is, too, I understand, noble in birth, and possessed of some wealth; minor considerations, yet of importance as the world goes. But I chiefly rejoice, Margaret (by the bye, I ought to have scolded you first, and I am forgetting that): I chiefly rejoice because you have not been enthralled by the errors of this church, to which you felt an inclination to attach yourself. This has spared another, as well as myself, a large amount of anguish, knowing as we do that in the most important of all matters we have equally neglected you through the past."

My wonder might have been excited as to who this "other" was. I saw that a great spiritual change had been wrought in Uncle Stephen; he had become a humble and earnest follower of Christ, and he looked back with horror

upon the unbelief of his past life. It was easier to tell me all this, than to work in myself the change I yet needed. I did not feel any absorbing interest in the matter; and, both with respect to myself and him, I was willing to let much rest without further inquiry. The two circumstances that alone made any great impression upon me were the proving of my grand-father's innocence, the particulars of which I was yet to learn, and Uncle Stephen's wish to go out to Australia. Speaking as he had done of M. de Beausset, seemed to tear open the many wounds of my heart; and I hoped that, without any necessity for my recurring to the subject, I should be able to turn the current of Uncle Stephen's thoughts.

I remained in possession of my own small property, Jean having, in the midst of all the confusion, transferred my boxes to M. de Beausset's carriage. I thought I had a right to keep the small sum supplied to me by the Comtesse de Lammenais, and which had been considerably diminished during my journey to Lombardy. This, with what I had in my box, seemed sufficient to defray the expenses of a passage to Australia, and to Australia all my thoughts now turned. I still retained my horror of either renewing my struggle for existence in England, or remaining a burden upon Uncle Stephen. I, however, reserved what I had to say until we arrived in England, for I did not yet feel myself safe from the machination of the priests.

CHAPTER XVIII.

I QUITTED France at the close of the month of August, and I had been absent from England eleven months. Uncle Stephen traveled post from Dover, and we arrived in London at night. My curiosity was inevitably roused by finding myself in a private dwelling, furnished with considerable elegance, though rather with a view to comfort than luxury, and the seeming mistress of which was introduced to me by the name of Mrs. Delamere. She was not more than thirty-six years of age, mild and pleasant in her manner—to me, even affectionate.

"Poor child!" she said, drawing me towards her, and kissing me,—"how I rejoice over you! We have had you in our thoughts and prayers a long time."

This address puzzled me still more, but I let it pass. I was next introduced to Mr. Delamere,—a quiet, gentlemanly personage,—who received me with the same unpretending kindness. We four took a light supper together, during which we were attended by a man-servant in plain clothes. I remarked how reverently Uncle Stephen bowed his head during the grace pronounced by Mr. Delamere. Shortly after supper the whole household of servants assembled to join in prayer.

Uncle Stephen first read a portion of the Scripture. He selected that affecting parable of the Prodigal Son, to which my attention had first been seriously drawn by little James Graham. My heart had long been in a stony state with regard to any real religious impression; but there were associations that softened it, as I listened to Uncle Stephen's impressive and fervent delivery of this passage,—of itself

God's most touching appeal to sinners such as he had been —such as I was. Uncle Stephen's conversion seemed remarkable, as he had held Christianity in abhorrence, as well as contempt, through a long life. I began to feel curious about the means by which it had been effected.

Mrs. Delamere showed me to my bed-room, the arrangements of which spoke of the same opulence and good taste. I slept heavily, not through any absence of mental pain, for, bear up bravely as I would, and amidst all that I had to be thankful for, there was a sense of sorrow and desolation about me that I could not shake off. When I awoke in the morning, and looked from the window, I saw that I was in an aristocratic part of the town. I was in a mood to be rather impatient with mysteries; I could not endure repose and uncertainty. I needed action, even to keep up my own courage, under the bitter trial I was compelled to go through, come what would. I was disappointed when I found that Uncle Stephen had gone out, merely leaving me a note, in which he promised to acquaint me with everything in the evening. I was received by Mr. and Mrs. Delamere with the same quiet benignity that characterized their demeanor the previous night. When the latter and myself were left together, she led me into a large room at the back of the house, that reminded me at once of a draper's shop and a ready-made linen ware-house. A long table, looking very like a counter, was covered with plain and new garments, of all sorts and sizes; and partitions round the walls were filled with flannels, prints, and calicoes.

"I, and a number of other Christian women," said Mrs. Delamere, "employ a portion of our time in making garments for the poor. I expect some of them immediately, and perhaps you will not mind sitting with us until Mr. Leath's return."

I could not object to this arrangement, though I had no heart in it. I distrusted these demonstrations of philanthropy, that were often the effect of a whim; oftener of a desire to appear well before the world. I was weary and impatient, too, as I have said; and it was not in the power of mortal to make a good Christian of me all at once, and enamour me with this work of love, and chain me down to it.

I was quite determined to take no part in the work—to sit merely, and look on. I would not encourage in any one the idea that it was possible to turn me from my own purpose of leaving England immediately.

Several ladies arrived, to the number of about twelve.—They were all quietly attired, all soft-spoken, and unpretending in manner, yet I cannot say that I liked either the manner or the look of some amongst them, for the spirit of the meeting did not sit alike easily and gracefully upon all.—There was a devil amongst the twelve apostles; and in any given number of ordinary mortals, I, at least, was not prepared to recognize perfection.

I was introduced severally to these ladies, who all received me with the same air of interest, at once earnest and gentle, that had characterized Mrs. Delamere herself. It was easier to resolve to sit and do nothing, than to put my plan into execution; but it was the mere weariness of inactivity that at length impelled me to offer my services in the cutting-up department. I, however, became interested in spite of myself. I heard them speak feelingly of widows and orphans, of destitute aged spinsters, and hard-worked, half-starved girls, who were to be benefitted by this work as far as individual benevolence could go. I had seen enough of destitution to believe that this was a good work. We sat from ten till one; and then the meeting broke up, and I was left alone with Mrs. Delamere.

We dined at five o'clock, when Mr. Delamere and Uncle Stephen came in. Afterwards, we two were left alone together.

"You are impatient, I know, Margaret," he said; "but to-night I will keep my word with you. I have yet much to relate that will excite your wonder, and I wish to proceed in a manner most likely to benefit you spiritually: I have prayed for this. You see how great a change has come over myself; I have been allowed to understand that the grace of God is a wonderful thing, that without it we are nothing humanly, or spiritually. In half an hour there will be an assemblage of Christians, who meet here periodically for the purpose of prayer. I wish you to join us before I enter upon the particulars I have to relate."

I merely signified my acquiescence in this arrangement, and nothing more was said. Uncle Stephen left me to myself for a short time, and I heard many people enter the house. Then he returned to me, and conducted me up stairs. The drawing-room was lighted up, and a large assemblage of people was collected, including Mr. and Mrs. Delamere and servants of the house. Uncle Stephen led me to a seat behind a chair and table, elevated near the centre of the room. There, with his arms resting upon the table, and his head bowed as if in prayer, knelt a man plainly dressed, whom I supposed to be the preacher. When all seemed to have arrived, he arose and gave out the words of a hymn, which he joined in singing. Then he read a portion of the Scripture, and finally, after another brief interval occupied in silent prayer, he arose and spoke. I could only see the back of his head; but his dark hair, and tall, manly figure, showed him to be in the prime of life. He selected for his text the verse from Isaiah: "For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee." He spoke extempore; one hand placed upon the Bible before him, the other resting in the folds of his coat. His rich, flexible, and powerful voice, was of itself sufficient to arrest attention; but there was evidently an utterance beyond this from the spirit and the heart, that irresistibly stirred the hearts and spirits of his hearers. I had never heard anything like it before, and my face flushed and paled by turns as he went on. There seemed to be no situation of life that he did not enter into and probe with a masterly hand,—down, at one moment, into the lowest depths of man's degradation, and apathy, and impotent rebellion; up, the next, into the heights of God's forbearance, and mercy, and fatherly care. He made me feel for the first time that I was entirely in God's hands—helpless in myself. A stubborn pride made me repress the tears that sprung to my eyes, but others were weeping round me; and I at length yielded to the impulse, and wept unrestrainedly. Uncle Stephen was at my side, weeping too; and I thought of my grand-father. I passed through the agony that all must feel who are convicted of sin; and then a holy calm fell upon my spirit. I was prepared for the concluding words of

the preacher, who said, speaking of the conversion of sinners, "This is thy work, O Lord Jesus!"

Another hymn was sung, and the meeting broke up. Uncle Stephen led me into a room, where we were alone.

"Oh, Uncle Stephen!" I said throwing my arms round his neck; "I have strayed altogether from the right way. Let us go to my grand-father; let us imitate him, and we shall be happy!"

Uncle Stephen returned my embrace with strong emotion. "Bless God!" he exclaimed; "our prayers have been heard! Yes, darling, we will go to your grand-father if you wish it, but first you have much to learn. Sit down now, and listen to me. I was first converted by the man you have just been listening to, who, like me, has been singularly delivered from sin and spiritual darkness by God's mercy. Two months back I heard that a certain personage was busy investigating your grand-father's case at ——. He made discoveries, respecting which he wrote to me, and he inquired earnestly after you. I went to him at ——. I first met him in a poor man's house, where I heard him preach with the same power that he showed to-night; for this, Margaret, was the man. I was strongly prejudiced against him—strongly fortified by my own opinions; but the strength of prejudice and the pride of human reason came to nothing in his hands. He was God's instrument to make me docile as a child. Since then we have acted in concert. He had learned some particulars, which we searched into, and this was the result. The son of David Marples, a boy twelve years old, had, out of curiosity, hid himself in the room in which the interview betwixt his father and uncle took place. He witnessed it from beginning to end. He averred before the magistrates that the two never approached each other, until his father, in the very moment of an outburst of passion, fell against the fender, displacing in his fall the poker, which fell upon the hearth-rug. Then he saw his uncle run to his father's help, and made his own escape by the side-door by which he had entered. He said he had been ashamed of speaking of this matter, knowing that he had done wrong; but even the conscience of the child would not let him rest after his uncle's condemnation. The

man I speak of—the preacher of to-night, remember—was the first to gain intelligence of this evidence, and he had it investigated fully. He had some influence at ——, and he made powerful use of it in your grand-father's behalf. He spoke eloquently of the simplicity of his character—of his blameless life, of his earnest and uniform piety. Men's feelings may be temporarily worked upon for good as well as evil—they have their manias of righteousness; and the very singularity in this case occasioned the population of —— to rise *en masse* in favor of your grand-father. After all, it did not rest with these people to do justice. The evidence furnished by young David Marples was communicated to the Home Secretary, and your grand-father was declared to be innocent. The ship that is now going out will bear this news to him. I learned from this same personage of whom we are speaking, that you had gone to France, and he was earnest in his wish that I should proceed in search of you. It was his own request that you should meet him to-night as you did."

"But who is he, Uncle Stephen. Ah, I see! he is simply a Christian, Christianity after all, means doing good."

"Yes, he is a Christain; but to you he is something more. From what you have seen, from what I have told you, can you form no guess at who he is?"

I could only look blankly in Uncle Stephen's face.

"See here, Margaret," he continued; "this man came to me and said,—'Brother, I have offended even you; forgive me!' What could I do? I was myself a convicted sinner before God; I could not say to another,—'I am better than thou!' We are not right when we can persist in making a mockery of the Lord's prayer, 'Forgive us, as we forgive.' You understand this, Margaret?"

"Yes; but why do you so urge it to-night, Uncle Stephen?"

"Because he of whom I am speaking fears to meet you, lest you should recoil from him with horror. You must remember two things, Margaret—that he is penitent, and that he is your father. I have been talking to you about Colonel Leigh."

I attempted to catch Uncle Stephen's arm as I started up,

but he stepped hastily back, and as he went out and closed the door behind him I was aware that I was not alone. Colonel Leigh was standing at a little distance, extending his arms towards me. It was a remnant of the old pride and passion, that at the instant enabled me to bear up as I looked at him. He was wonderfully changed, so that I could hardly have recognized him, face to face as we were, and though the only merely material difference was that he was paler and closely shaved. It was the inward man that exerted this wonderful power over the outward. The proud, bold, indifferent look had departed, and was replaced by a yearning expression of sorrow and humility; the figure, once erect in its animal power, was supple and yielding, and the hand he held towards me shook. The electrical fire that draws spirit to spirit touched me, and I rushed to him.

"Ah, I can comprehend this!" I said. "We are equals in the sight of God, and we can forget our mortality and all the differences of earth!" He held me in a close embrace and kissed my forehead.

"My poor child!" he said, in a voice broken by emotion; "it is God that enables you to turn to me thus, for I have not deserved that you should forgive me! You must bear with me now in another way, for I know that my enormity has been great; and I love greatly, feeling what has been done for me. Bless you, my child! if I did not know that Providence had watched over you I should now be wretched!"

He placed me in a seat beside him and took one of my hands in his.

"The past of our lives has been a blank one to the other, Margaret," he said. "Will you now confide in me, as one anxious only to promote your spiritual and temporal happiness?"

That was an unfortunate speech; for, temporally, I felt that he could do nothing for me: I wished to preserve our spiritual relation apart from everything else. I felt that this man, who was so eager to make atonement for his sin, was destined to share with me the punishment of it.

"Let us not talk of the past," I said; "it wearies me, even while I feel bold to go on into the future. There is

only one earthly subject upon which I can dwell: I wish to go to my grand-father—to leave this place."

"And me, Margaret?"

"And you. I leave you in God's hands; I will pray for you. Through the future we can never be indifferent to each other if we keep the faith. Let us rejoice in this, and in everything else keep silence."

"You oppress me," he said, with a disturbed look. "You are young, and you have a future in the world, which I would provide for. I had a hope that you would point out to me the way of doing this."

Here was the retribution. I was prouder than this man, who had formerly fenced himself about with all the pride of earth. That which appeared to him a possibility was to me a dead blank. In this contention between us, should I be compelled to make him aware of the fact? I remained silent, and he spoke on.

"I have scarcely a right to inquire, yet I should like to learn from yourself the particulars of your sojourn in France. Will the recital be too painful to you, Margaret?"

I replied by narrating all that had happened to me in France.

"I never," said Colonel Leigh, when I had concluded, "felt the same bold, bad confidence, in myself after your visit. I could not put away from me the thought of your wandering, forlorn and friendless, in a foreign land. This restless feeling prepared me for what afterwards happened when coming to Mr. Delamere's prayer-meeting, merely out of curiosity, I left the house a changed man. But this M. de Beausset, Margaret, who should have married my cousin; he evidently loves me: you cannot be indifferent to him?"

It struck me as a singularity that Colonel Leigh, himself so recently a man of the world, should seriously dwell upon the likelihood of M. de Beausset willingly uniting his fate with mine when made acquainted with all the facts of my life; overlooking the certainty of society's disapprobation and his family's disgust; overcoming his own prejudices, and stifling his inborn sense of what was honorable; or, worse, subjecting himself to a life of after-regret. In our

several ways we expect too much from others, and so become finally intolerant.

He had equally overlooked myself, and it seemed odd to have to say to him, "I am too proud to marry this M. de Beausset." I was compelled to say something, therefore I acquainted him with my early determination never to marry. He rested his face upon his hands as I spoke, and remained silent some minutes.

"You have had the advantage of being educated by two honorable and upright men, Margaret," he said, at length, "and you have proved youself to be brave and incorruptible. Do not let this bravery overwhelm me. I have flattered myself with the hope of being allowed to contribute to your happiness in the future: do not destroy this hope. I considered myself a poor man three months ago; but I am rich now with my altered habits and tastes. All that I have is yours, Margaret; and, as my acknowledged daughter, you will have a position in the world. Consider how strong is my wish to make atonement; how heavily it is in your power to punish me."

All this distressed me very much, because my own unalterable resolution, was the sole stay of my life. I was not capable of being drawn from it, and the offer now made was repugnant to me on many accounts. I could only shrink from the idea of remaining in England, and descending to the meanness of seeking, in chance advantages, a meagre pretence of eligibility to the hand and affections of M. de Beausset. If unworthy of him, as I had been, I would remain so, and preserve my own self-respect. I turned from Colonel Leigh to my grand-father as decidedly as I should have turned in that direction from the merest stranger.—With all my respect for the Christian I lacked affection for the man. I explained to him, as briefly and inoffensively as possible, my conviction that I could only be happy in the condition in which I was born and educated. If I rose, I must rise of myself. He was considerably depressed by my obstinacy, and afterwards appealed to Uncle Stephen.

Fortunately, for the ending of this contention, a letter arrived from my grand-father. He spoke of enjoying good health, and of having received much kinder treatment than

he could have expected under the circumstances. He wrote by another hand, being now totally blind. He commended us to the keeping of God, spoke of his own strong trust, and concluded by saying that if he were free, and us with him, he should have no wish to return to England.

This letter, and my determination, decided Uncle Stephen to act promptly. He took a passage for us both on board the vessel that was to convey my grand-father's acquittal, and that sailed in three weeks.

Colonel Leigh placed in his hands the sum of two thousand pounds for my benefit, and this I did not refuse. In the meantime he did all in his power to give me pleasure He began by making Jem (who was still with Uncle Stephen, and who had been rejoiced to see me,) his sole and confidential servant. Colonel Leigh and Jem! There was something wonderful in the power that drew and kept these two together until the death of one of them, and that occasioned Jem to say before I left him, that he never got more life out of anybody than he did out of his new master.

And Colonel Leigh, who now spent the chief part of his income in charities, eagerly entered into my surviving interest in the unfortunate Susan Lester, and the two children of Mrs. Graham. He accompanied me to the work-house, where I learned that Ellen was dead. Lilly was brought to us, but I did not know her. She had been disfigured by having, as the woman in charge of her said, accidentally got herself on fire. She seemed to me to be quite idiotic. She had no recollection of me, or of anything in the past. Colonel Leigh promised me that he would place her in an asylum for orphans. Of Susan I could gain no intelligence whatever, as she had disappeared from her former place of residence. I learned strange news of Mr. Bontoft. His wife had run off with Captain Phipps, and he had become niggardly and morose, and had taken his niece, Mrs. Elliott, for a housekeeper. We had a letter from Jean, in which he said that his master was slowly recovering, but that he had not been allowed to see him. He was under the care of his uncle, the Cardinal Caradoni, and Jean feared that some charge was about to be preferred against him by M. l'Abbé Roullett. Colonel Leigh did me the best possible service by

promising to proceed immediately to Vienna and inquire into these circumstances, and explain the service rendered to myself, and thank M. de Beausset personally, if possible. I entrusted him with a letter for M. de Beausset from myself.

Upon quitting England finally, I must do it the justice of expressing my belief that nowhere are the precepts of Christ more fully carried out by those imbued with the genuine spirit of Christianity. This is only a poor tribute to the kindness I met at the hands of Mr. and Mrs. Delamore and their friends, and which was constantly and actively exerted for the destitute and unfortunate. This human sympathy in the midst of religious toleration is the true glory of the land. I certainly felt some affection for Colonel Leigh when we parted—perhaps some compunction on his account; he seemed so depressed, so forlorn. I understood from Uncle Stephen that the general, who gave him up as a madman, and lady Leigh and her daughters, who considered that he was disgracing the family, and the dean, who protested that his new views and habits were derogatory to the dignity of the Church, were all estranged from him. He was made to pay the penalty of forsaking the world and following Christ, but he was borne up to the end.

It wanted just three weeks of my eighteenth birthday when I and Uncle Stephen took a final leave of our friends and England. I was not free from heart-ache during the voyage, though I did not regret the step I had taken. I was violently, and for ever, wrenching myself away from one whom I loved with my whole soul: I was leaving him in circumstances of danger and of bodily suffering all incurred on my account. In the midst of this conflict, however, I was aware of the presence of more mental quiet than I had known during the last three years Young as I was, I had been sobered by experience and suffering; my faith in God was no longer wavering; and I knew that, unless the heart could brave sorrow, the spirit's courage to persevere in right was availless. I had lost, too, the restless consciousness of being impelled irresistibly on by some power superior to my own will, toward what I knew not. I could understand and feel that, in gaining Christ, I had accomplished the end and object of my being.

I shall not attempt to describe our meeting with my grand-father, nor the effect upon him of the news we brought, further than to say that the dear, blind old man, was temperate in his joy, as he had been firm and uncomplaining under wrong and sorrow. We proceeded together from Sydney to Melbourne, where Uncle Stephen learned from a gentleman to whom George had been furnished with a letter of introduction the address of the latter, near two hundred miles off, in the heart of Australia Felix. George had seen my grand-father, and had written home by a ship that passed us.

Leaving me and my grand-father very comfortably settled at Melbourne, Uncle Stephen set out alone for George's station, intending to purchase another farm for us and himself. In the course of two months he and George came to fetch us.

I was pleased to see the latter treat me with the frank and brotherly affection that I had formerly told him I should prize, and I expected no less from him; for George was a generous and noble-minded man, and it was quite delightful to see how heartily he entered into his new occupations, as if he had really found out the right sphere of action at last.

I was struck at first sight with the improved looks of both him and my grand-father. The climate seemed to agree marvellously with the latter, who was growing stout. As to young Henry Elliott, he was half wild with exuberance of spirits. I began to feel this effect of the climate myself. The weight upon my heart was lightened; I began to take a more earnest interest in what was around me, and I soon found plenty to do. Uncle Stephen had taken a farm, on which we found a very commodious dwelling, situated about five miles from George's. It was wonderful, and of itself a pleasureable excitement, to see how earnestly the hale and hearty old man entered into his new pursuits; clearing his land (for there was much wood about us,) buying, and tending, and selling cattle, as if he had never done anything else all his life. I was his house-keeper, and I soon became learned in the mysteries of kangaroo steaks and cockatoo pies. I had a dairy, which I superintended myself; and I insisted upon having a garden, which was chiefly attended to by

George and Henry Elliott during spare hours. Uncle Stephen would often laughingly say, whilst eulogizing me as the best house-keeper for miles around, that he might have spared himself a deal of trouble, if he had known, years ago, that my only really useful acquirements would come naturally. My grand-father was delighted as a child with everything, though he could see nothing; I was restored to him, and his old friend was brought into the fold of Christ. Oh, we were very happy, in spite of the old turmoil, in spite of my regrets!

At the expiration of six months from our arrival we received a large packing-case and a letter from Colonel Leigh. The former was filled with books, the works of select authors, and the letter chiefly referred to an interview he had had with M. de Beausset, who was restored to health, and free, and happy to hear of my welfare. This was all he said of him, and I felt a pang resembling disappointment. Had I been hoping something more, after all? I reproved my own folly, and roused myself, and returned to my ordinary occupations.

Three more months elapsed, and we went on very cheerily. There was no weariness in this new life of itself. I believe we all had an idea that we were growing younger every day,—at least, that was my impression with regard to myself and others. We had many neighbors within the circuit of a few miles, friendly and intelligent people, whom it was a pleasure to entertain and visit; and we had frequent calls from strangers, who were always welcome; frequent encounters with the natives, all amicable. Above everything, we were free from the terror of poverty and its consequences—that great incubus of my former life.

By contrasting my destiny with thousands who, in free and happy England, were condemned to slavish toil for the preservation of a miserable existence, I grew into a gradual thankfulness for my individual lot. What a great help it was to have everybody happy about me! There was no escaping the contagion. I heard of nothing but progress from day to day, for if any failed in this prosperous country, we were ignorant of the fact in our remote and thriving settlement.

I was one day walking about the garden, which, by dint of coaxing and scolding, I had brought Uncle Stephen to attend to in earnest, when our female servant brought me a letter, which she said a strange gentleman, who had just arrived, and who was sitting with my grand-father, had delivered to her. It was in the hand-writing of Colonel Leigh, and I opened it with trepidation. I read thus much of it at the moment:—

"My dear Daughter,

"This will be delivered to you by M. de Beausset; and for my sake, and for the sake of the devotion to yourself that he has proved so fully, I hope——"

The words swam before my eyes, and the letter shook in my hands. I was not in a much better condition, when, a few minutes afterwards, M. de Beausset himself knelt at my feet.

Well, it is no use dwelling upon what he said, or what I did in consequence. At the moment that I am writing this, a very sturdy young Victor de Beausset, five years old, is leading his blind grand-father about the garden; a little Emillie de Beausset, who has scarcely numbered three years, is feeding a tame cockatoo on the steps of the verandah, in whose shade I am sitting. Nurse is not far from me, with baby sleeping in her lap while she is knitting. Uncle Stephen is seated at a table very close to mine, with a Bible before him, arranging the heads of his to-morrow's discourse; for to-morrow is Sunday, dear reader, and Uncle Stephen is our minister. In a large log-shed, erected especially for the purpose by M. de Beausset, we muster a rather numerous and very "respectable" congregation.

M. de Beausset is more of a lover than he was before our marriage; making up, as he says, for lost time. I expect every moment to hear his cheery voice, and meet his bright, joyous look; for he has been absent all day, with three of our men, helping George, who is still a bachelor, to recover some strayed cattle. If I had any words that would express the happiness of my present lot, I should write them down

Colonel Leigh (there are no words, either, to express the love I feel for him *now*) died nine months ago, leaving to me all he was possessed of, after making some charitable bequests. Jem, to whom he left a competence, has, from choice, entered the service of Mr. Delamere.

If it had been possible for me to believe, that in securing my own happiness and independence I had earned the right of fencing myself about with earthly good, chiefly as a warning against trespass to the unfortunate and the needy; if, without believing this, I could do it, and shut out from my thoughts the thousands who are suffering in many lands, I should not have written this book, the result of my haunting dreams of the past. I owe it to God's grace first, and next to my own trial, that I have been incapable of forgetting or ceasing to feel for the privation and oppression that are at this moment crushing down souls and dooming bodies to a lingering and torturing death in the old country. To that country I would say,—Instead of teaching, as now, that want of money, and such position as money only may give, includes the want of moral rectitude, the absence of all that is elevating in thought or feeling, thereby making poverty a mighty engine for the degradation of man, and too hideous to be borne;—let the truer doctrine be promulgated, that wealth, and competence, and worldly rank, fostering as they do a selfish indulgence and a spirit of insolent superiority, tend to make men little and feeble, by giving them false views of life: for struggle is the parent of heroisms, and the heroic will, in the end, triumph over the indulged and the self-conceited; and this truth may be carried to the extent of proving a nation's prosperity to be its great weakness instead of its power.

For the great of this world, the ostentatious, the wealthy, and the comfortable, are not the truly fortunate, and never will be whilst the power of doing good is not universally recognized as the highest privilege of humanity; never whilst adversity and trial continue to be God's chief means of drawing souls to Himself. And the experience of all time claims for them that have suffered, and through suffering learned to know themselves and understand others, a

superiority of mind and will that has won for itself a proud place in the chronicles of earth.

In conclusion I would say, chiefly to the down-trodden of my own sex, Come to this land! Come from the slavery of whatever kind that is a disgrace to others, and a wearing down of life with its energies to yourselves! Come from the contempt that makes even honest bread bitter to the taste! Here the educated and the sensitive will not be tried beyond endurance by the meanness and the insolence of power; here the ignorant will not be debased by the grovelling teachings of conventionalism. If England has sent out to us many imbued only with a sordid spirit, of gain, these either hurry back with their gold to the home where it promises them most consideration, or, by their reckless extravagance and want of intelligence and principle, give fair promise of coming to nothing where they are. We have a nobler population, made up of earnest strugglers for independence; men and women, who have passed through an ordeal that has purified their dross, and prepared them for an earnest pursuit of noble purposes; plans and views worthy of immortal creatures, whose course here was not meant to be impeded by bans and difficulties that drag down and confine flesh and bone, and every sinew of the spirit, to an inadequate providing for the most sordid of all wants. I glory in the country of my adoption; I have great hope for it in the future that is to come; and though I think less than nothing of the chance prophecy of Morgotte, I believe that a noble empire will arise in this land, whose chief power will be derived from the teachings of men, who, by endurance and struggle, have learned to be just; and amongst the generations of these will be found the descendants of Thomas Marples and Victor de Beausset.

THE END.

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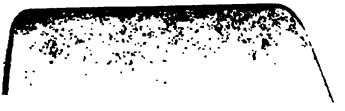
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